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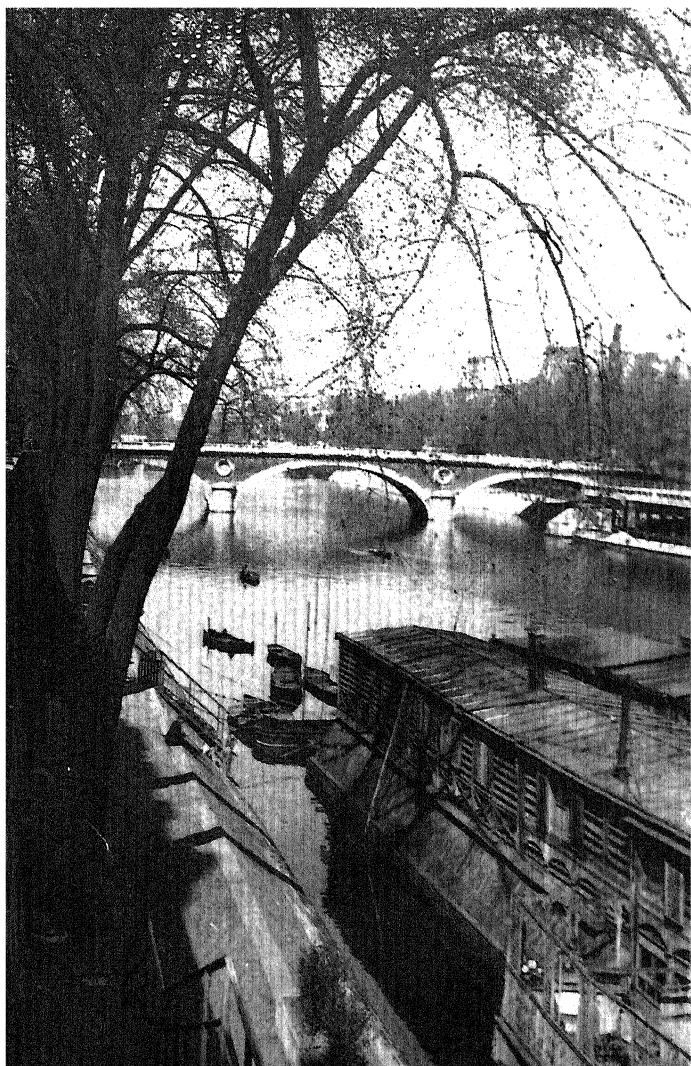
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THE FACE OF FRANCE



Courtesy Railways of France

SPRINGTIME ON THE SEINE IN PARIS

THE FACE OF FRANCE

by

HARRY J. GREENWALL

Illustrated



FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY
NEW YORK AND LONDON

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TO
“MARY”

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THE FACE OF FRANCE

I

PILGRIMS' PROGRESS

FOG-BOUND were the Pyrenees as we crawled slowly round hairpin bends, fearsomely feeling our way into Southwest France. Fog that followed the ever-dripping rain, fog that hid the awesome abyss as well as the views for which our guide-books had told us to watch out.

Romantic frontier country, this, wild and scraggy. Far to the west the ocean thunders. Mountains and rivers which divide France and Spain; pathways for smugglers, and roads, and roads, and roads.

France, the land of the soldiers, the merchants, and the priests. The soldiers who chose the sites which could be defended; the merchants who chose that the cities should be built to command the crossroads, and then the priests who somehow managed to rule, to be permanent, even when the lands were ruled by warrior dukes and barons, whose counties were divided by imaginary lines even as the world is today divided, and, as today, the imaginary lines were no prevention of the jealous hates which led to battle.

Over the roads clattered the mules and the horses, later the coaches, later still the trains, and now, as the fog lifts, we see the cars that dot the roads, while above there drones through the air the plane cleaving her passage over the mountains to Madrid.

We drive through mountain tunnels, bored through granite-like rock, smooth as a billiard table. We see and hear roaring torrents, cascades that have flowed through

the centuries. On and on, up and down, across the frontier where shabby guards collect a few shillings. And the rain drips, drips, drips.

Lourdes is our objective, Lourdes the Miraculous, a magnet for pilgrims since the miller's daughter saw the Virgin Mary appear to her.

In 1858, Bernadette Soubirous stated that on February 11, when she was in the Massabielle Grotto, the Virgin appeared and said: "I am the Immaculate Conception." Bernadette was then fourteen years old and a shepherdess. The bishops investigated the claim and subsequent claims that Bernadette made about the Virgin appearing to her. In 1862 the bishops decided there had been a miracle and that prayers might be made to Our Lady of Lourdes. Bernadette went into a convent at Nevers and died when she was thirty-five.

Forty-four years after the little shepherdess had died and brought a huge fortune to the fortune hunters of Lourdes, the Pope decided that Bernadette could be canonized. She became Sainte Bernadette and they put up a hideous statue to her which they illuminate, on fête days, with garish electric globes.

Ten thousand inhabitants of Lourdes share the wealth which 600,000 pilgrims bring them annually. From far-away England, from Hungary, and, criss-crossing across Europe, come rumbling trains of crippled pilgrims bound for the healing waters of Lourdes. Doctors, nurses and priests accompany the devout. The rich and the poor and the very poor, who have scraped together the fare, penny by penny, are carried out of the trains with gentleness and kindness and put on stretchers and wheeled carriages, and, in their pain and suffering, are transported to the hotels which lodge them each according to their means.

Tonight they pray for tomorrow's miracle.

Perched high on a rocky mountain, chosen by the soldiers, Lourdes is divided into two parts: to the east, the old business city, to the west, the religious city, fenced in with an iron *grille* and surrounded by monasteries, convents, hotels with religious-sounding names, and shops selling articles of piety. During the height of the pilgrimages practically all the private houses in Lourdes are turned into boarding houses.

Not all pilgrims are crippled, many are whole and well, but have come because of a vow made. For them, Lourdes provides two cinemas and a Panorama show. Several cafés are in the main street, but, for the most part, the citizens of Lourdes stay home and thank God for miracles.

We English, who have had quite a lot of French territory in our hands from time to time, also once had Lourdes. It was the Treaty of Bretigny which ceded Lourdes to the English and, after two sieges, one late in the fourteenth century and another which lasted eighteen months in the beginning of the fifteenth century, the French got Lourdes back. Vicomte de Lavedan's castle was turned into a jail by Louis XIV, but Napoleon Bonaparte closed it up. Until the miller's daughter brought fame and fortune, Lourdes had no history.

The main, or high, street of Lourdes, the Rue de la Grotte, winding and narrow, hums like a beehive on the days of the big pilgrimages. Busy little electric trams dash along. The street is blocked by the devout. Pilgrims who can walk are buttonholed by the shopkeepers, eager to sell them something. "The only genuine water of the Grotto"—twenty shops lay claim to the only genuine. Bonbons made from the miraculous and healing water, plaster statues, small, medium and large, of the Virgin and Sainte Bernadette, picture postcards, rosaries,

your photo while you wait. Sandwich men picket some shop warning you not to deal there because the assistants are sweated. All morning long the Rue de la Grotte is like a fair, and early afternoon the excitement reaches fever pitch. The big ceremony is at 4 P.M.

Lourdes keeps careful check on its miraculous cures. A board of international doctors enters up in ledgers a strict account of every cure. There are three baths, two of them for women only. Then there is the Miraculous Fountain which pours out the healing water at the rate of eighty-five liters a minute.

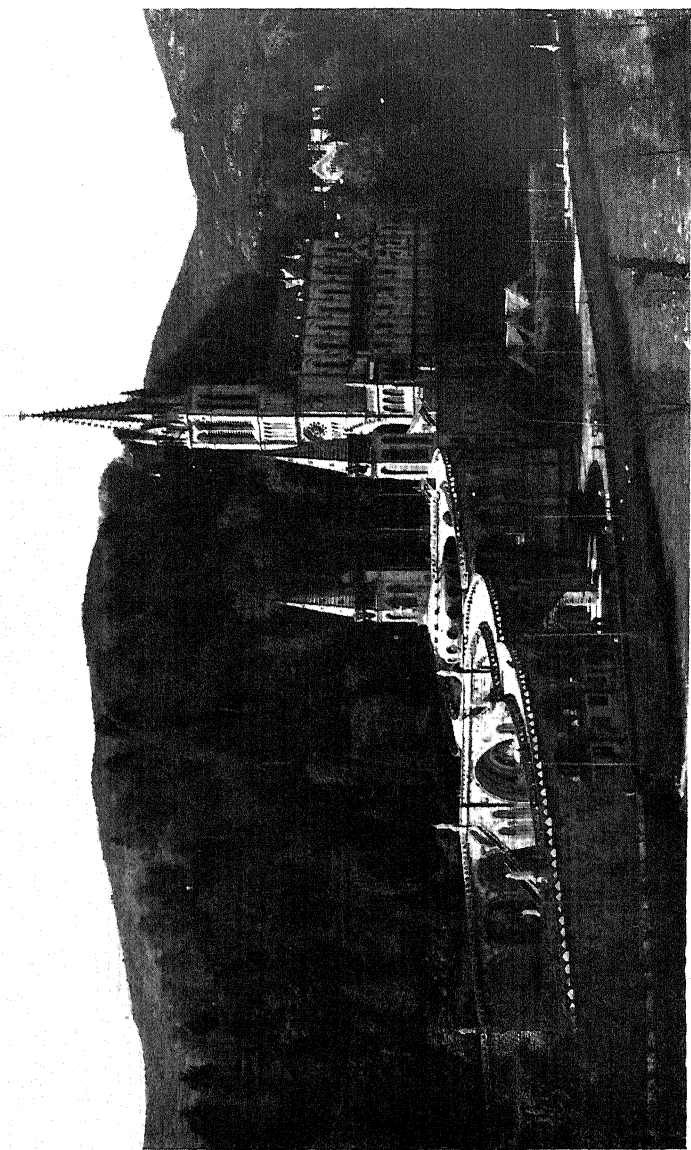
There is a little museum of crutches, thrown away by those who have been cured.

Inside the fenced-off religious city and before reaching the huge Esplanade which fronts the Basilique, the pilgrims pass various religious statues and monuments, and then they come to the sight of the Holy Grotto.

What must be the emotions and flutterings of hearts! The goal at last reached, the long and weary journey, every jolt of a carriage wheel an agony. The murmured prayers, the telling of beads, the hopes. The love and devotion that had made the journey possible! Dante wrote that the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. The way to Lourdes is paved with hope.

The Basilique is not beautiful. It looks like a two-tier wedding cake. The Church is built above the Grotto and seems to be out of proportion and badly balanced. But the pilgrims have not come to study art. They are here to pray, to be cured or to beg that some loved one may be cured.

As the hands of the clock move toward four, the three-ringed Esplanade begins to be packed with suffering humanity. The citizens of Lourdes who have sold almost



Courtesy Railways of France

LOURDES: THE BASILICA BUILT OVER THE MIRACULOUS GROTTO



Courtesy Railways of France

BASQUE VILLAGE IN THE PYRENEES NEAR BAYONNE

all they can, this day, leave their shops and their homes and crowd the outer circle of the Esplanade.

The invalid carriages, the bath chairs, all the paraphernalia of the halt and the maimed, are lined up on three sides of the square; the fourth side is the Basilique.

Sonorously, the praying starts. There are chants, slow-moving processions and rich singing. The paralyzed, prone on their backs, murmur with ecstasy, and their eyes shine as if they were looking straight into Heaven.

The priests move in front of the invalid carriages, and the prayers rise in cadence. Those who can move kneel as the Host passes. From all over the Esplanade prayers are flowing Heavenwards. Oh, if only one could cure *all* these devout, these poor souls who have come so far.

The priests pray aloud, but seemingly without conviction. They address themselves to the Virgin and beseech Her to cure. "Thou canst do it if thou wilt. . . . Thou canst do it if thou wilt," they clamor. We notice one who glances at his gold watch as he prays for his flock to be cured. He puts the watch back sadly in his pocket. His voice trails away. It is rather like somebody with an inferiority complex asking Exchange for a telephone number.

Is religion exploited in Lourdes?

Obviously it is. It is a non-regulated traffic in souls. We stand behind the line of crippled pilgrims and watch a grim sight. A deformed and idiot boy child is held aloft in his father's arms. The mother is there too. Both the parents' eyes are running tears. The child has the semi-grin of an imbecile. Can a man who professes religion professionally so little understand the Almighty as to believe that this little idiot boy can be switched to normalcy?

While the prayers were being said on the Esplanade,

the holy water was gushing forth from a crevice in the rocks. Some of it is canalized in pipes which run beneath the sacristy and feed the baths; some of it is carried in other pipes to taps which are for the use of the pilgrims. Here a trade is done in flasks and utensils for carrying away and home the blessed water. One may easily close one's eyes and be transported to Benares, the Holy City on the far-away River Ganges. True, here in Southwest France, civilization shows itself in the clothing of the human figure, but the parallel of fanatic belief is there. In sun-soaked India the Hindu stands naked in the Ganges, lapping up with both hands the fetid waters of the river. In sun-scorched Lourdes the true believer pays a few pence for the privilege of carrying away with him a sample of the waters which, to him, are as important as the waters of the Ganges are to a Hindu. Wealth flows to the bazaar-keepers of Benares just as it does to the shopkeepers of Lourdes.

There is one interesting and important publication in Lourdes. It is a weekly and sometimes a bi-weekly bulletin of arrivals and departures of the trains of pilgrims, the "white trains," as they call them. It gives the exact number of pilgrims arriving by each train and it allows the hotel-keepers and the shopkeepers to adjust themselves. They have a finely balanced commercial sense, these shopkeepers; they know how the pilgrims may be divided into classes of potential spenders; they know, for example, that two trains of Lancastrian pilgrims will be worth more than four trainloads of pilgrims from Alsace. It is all a question of values.

The worst cases of illness among the cripples are lodged in the Hospice of Notre Dame des Douleurs, some way from the Holy Grotto. Those who are, as often as not, literally sick unto death are carried down to the icy cold

waters and plunged in, but there are doctors present. Nevertheless, deaths do occur at Lourdes, just as they happen in the trains going to and fro.

Some few years ago a train of pilgrims bound for Lourdes met with a terrible disaster when near the Holy City. The locomotive was unable to make the grade and ran backwards and crashed into a stationary train, wrecking itself and killing pilgrims who were journeying to Lourdes, full of hope.

The pilgrimages to Lourdes are well arranged, so that all through the year the trains are pulling in. Early in February they begin to arrive for the Anniversary of the First Apparition, which was on the 11th. The next important pilgrimage is on March 25, for Annunciation. The peak period is between August 18 and August 25, the time of what they call the National Pilgrimages, when Lourdes is packed out, the hotel-keepers turning away pilgrims, and the happy householders are sleeping in garrets and cellars, the better to accommodate worshipers at the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes.

Lourdes then enters into a period of relative quiet, until the first Sunday in December, which is the Festival of the Rosary, and eight days later the Festival of the Immaculate Conception.

The two December festivals are famous throughout the Southwest for their night processions. A big bowl of shiny silver hangs suspended in the skies by invisible threads. It casts a ghostly light over the valley. The mountains stand on guard, like grim sentinels wrapped in cloaks of black, only a bare silhouette showing. The river gives back the glimpses of the moon, and surrounding her like attendant maidens are the stars, pieces of silver scattered pell-mell on robes of blue-black velvet.

The night sounds are hushed. The cinemas are closed and the cafés almost deserted.

At the entrance of the Esplanade there are the garish illuminations of the ugly statues, but heed them not, it is unnecessary.

From afar come angel voices, the chants of the Church pierce the cold air. Nearer and nearer comes the music and the chanting. There are candles that shine uncannily yellow against the silver light of the moon and the stars. Prayers are being said by hundreds, staccato Latin stabs the night. Then the musical chanting starts again, and the procession moves on round the Esplanade.

Business and religion are closely allied in Lourdes. When you stand on the Esplanade, facing the statue of the Virgin and the Church of the Rosary, and you, a worldly, hard-bitten cynic, perhaps, are trying to get the feel of it, seeking to be emotionalized by the fervor of religion you are aware of all round, you suddenly become conscious that under the arcade on the right, and just beneath the Church, is the office where they keep a medical record of the Miracles.

It is explained a hundred times that Lourdes does not want any false claims set up and that each and every alleged cure is strictly investigated. But just enter the Church for a moment. From the roof hang numerous banners and trophies brought by religious societies from almost all over the world. Among the banners are many thank offerings, a goodly number of undoubted value, but the majority, the gifts of humble pilgrims, are naïve and touching in their simplicity: alarm clocks and kitchen utensils, for instance. Each article, each gift, reminds one of that touching story of the Juggler of Notre Dame, the poor wandering performer of the roads, who became a novice. All the monks brought their gifts and placed

them at the feet of the statue of Our Lady, but the poor Juggler had nothing to bring, so he performed his paltry tricks, to the disgust and horror of the monks, but the Juggler wrought a miracle because the statue of Our Lady moved her arms and she smiled her sad sweet smile which encompasses all the suffering and all the maternal goodness of good women.

Perhaps, who dare say no, the saucepans and the alarm clocks and the gimcrack presents brought from tiny little European villages to this mountain town in Southwest France, do portend something that even this hard and commercialized religion cannot explain away?

When the day is done and the overexcited pilgrims have been taken back to their hotels and their hospices to pray alone and to sleep, and perhaps to dream that tomorrow a miracle will really and truly happen, the religious city, as they call it, closes down. The lights are extinguished and the iron doors of the *grille* which separates the two Lourdes are closed.

The cinemas open up. In one they show a silent film of the life of Bernadette Soubirous, the little shepherdess daughter of a miller who innocently brought fame and fortune to one particular Grotto in a district of hundreds.

Café terraces are crowded with pilgrims who are whole and healthy, but who came here because of a vow. It is a big night for many families. Little Berthe is allowed to sit up and sip some pretty-looking sirup. The idiot boy is being fed drops of his father's beer. The religious day is done. Life must go on. Why not?

As my mother used to say, it takes all sorts to make a world.

II

TOULOUSE AND ALL THAT

IT is difficult to kill a legend. We tell our children that carrots will make their hair curl, and before they are out of socks they sneer, but when they grow up and have children they will most certainly tell *their* children to eat *their* carrots because it will make their hair curl.

We are told that the Latin peoples are excitable and not dependable, not like us hardy Norsemen, men of brawn and muscle. "A Frenchman has no sense of fair play." As a strict matter of fact, there is no man in the world who has a stricter sense of fair play. "The French cannot play games." Oh, can they not? We will not bother to go through the long list of tennis champions, but while we are packing the car to go to Tarbes, let us have a few words together about football.

When they talk of football in America they mean a terrifically fast game which is akin to what they call in England "rugger." When they talk of football in France it is much the same as in England; some play "soccer" and some play "rugger," but the home of "rugger" in France is just where we are now, down in the Southwest. The dark young men of these parts are the finest players of Rugby football to be found on the Continent of Europe. On account of a stupid quarrel some years back, France no longer takes part in international games against England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. The quarrel was mostly about professionalism, and, quite incidentally, the British sense of fair play was not so prominent that it

could be noticed. These soft Latins play "rugger." Well, the next time you get an opportunity of seeing Tarbes or Toulouse in action, do not fail to take it. You may be surprised. Tough, that's what.

You may have been uplifted in Lourdes, or you may depart with sadness in your heart because religion, the beauty of religion, has been so commercialized; it all depends. Now we are going away, driving through wild, mountainous country, passing many grottoes, roaring torrents, watching and, I hope, learning something of a countryside which is soaked in history, and which somehow has never changed. "*Quand le Midi bouge*," they say in French, sometimes with a cynical shrug, but if and when this part of France moves, it will move with one set purpose. The peasants seem as dour as the Scots, as immovable as their own scraggy mountains, but when one has seen a lithe young Toulousian three-quarter with the ball, one knows that the quickness of the hands and the feet can deceive the eye.

This part of the world is the home of the French Radicals, the stronghold, firm as the Pyrenees, that will never surrender to Fascism or whatever form of government they may decide upon "up there in the North." And now let us go and take a look at it.

Look around you as we speed away, and you will realize what I mean by the unchangingness of this countryside. The stone houses have stood for years and years, just as other stone houses, as like to them as two peas in a pod, stood there for years and years before them. They may have fallen down, or been allowed to fall down, their occupants may have died, have married and moved into another stone house, but when another stone house was built, it was just like the one before it. So it still is. The winter winds blow, and the spring comes and the soil is

worked, and the summer and the autumn and the winter again, generation after generation of dark, brown-skinned people, backs bent to the soil. Toiling without end. To be a soldier when you are eighteen, to serve your time in peace, if it be peace, or to be killed or maimed in war, all for a few *sous* a day and no complaints, and then to get married and beget children, and to inherit the stone house sheltered behind the hill, and to rise before it is light, and to go into the fields, and dig and toil, toil, toil.

Waterfalls to the right and the left of us as we drive along the well-conditioned roads, past the ruins of Roman towers, through narrow village streets, winding, twisting, turning, up and down hill, over rivers and through the valley of the Azun, where pastoral life is as it was centuries ago.

But even if native life has not changed, and the face of France is as it always was, one must admit that nothing of interest to the tourist is ever neglected. A town may have but a few thousand inhabitants, but it will have its casino and its tennis courts, its theater and cinema. There are nearly always two distinct towns, the half which lives for and on the tourist, and the native town which disregards the visitor and lives for itself alone.

Going through the old town of Argeles we notice a tablet on a house. It is where Marshal Foch's forebears were born; perhaps this makes the ancient town a little more proud, its War Memorial just a wee bit more imposing than others.

Ruins abound on all sides. Stop, if you will, and hear the traditional tale of how in the year 600 Roland killed two impious giants; how, three hundred and fifty years later, the Normans burnt the abbey, and three hundred years after that it was rebuilt and made into a monastery which possessed magic healing waters. Then the charac-

teristic modern touch: the Syndicate of the Valley of Saint Savin now owns the thermal springs.

And yet the ruins and their history mean nothing to the peasants who take a swift passing glance at our car, and then bend their backs again over the soil. History means nothing, but a *sou* on the cost of a pound of bread means everything. When you see the three words on an election poster: "Bread, Work, Peace," you may think it is merely political claptrap, but it is real, that is all the peasant needs or wants, and that is what he expects from his Deputy.

Leaving our car parked in a village beside the road—it will be quite safe—we will take one of the many mule tracks and climb a little; a mile or two will bring us to some little village as remote as next year. Here the peasant tends his flock of sheep or goats, and will go, perhaps on a Sunday after Mass, down to the town, but further away than that he will never venture all his life; maybe his father has never been further, and his sons never will; his whole world is encompassed by the scraggy hills, the inhospitable near-by mountains. Military service will move his body, but never his spirit. He is of the race that for generations has produced the smugglers who have found their way over similar mule tracks through the Pyrenees into Spain.

A gastronomic tour of France, undertaken with an open mind, would convince a true gourmet that the best food in the country is to be found in the districts we are now touring, the Southwest, and particularly the regions between Toulouse and Bordeaux. There are what may be termed three schools of cooking in France: the butter school, the classical cooking, to be found chiefly in the north and the west; the oil school, olive oil, used all along the Mediterranean coast, and disliked mostly by those

who have never tried it; and the southwest school, which uses both oil and butter, and also goose-fat and lard. You may not believe it, but a ham omelette has a different flavor when it is cooked in a pan which contains an entirely different frying mixture; the ham and the eggs can be the same, it does not matter.

The most intriguing explanation the writer has ever heard concerning the excellence of French cooking came from a well-informed person who affirmed that hard times arising from frequent invasions of France forced the people to become ingenious in the kitchen. Wars and famines arising therefrom first introduced frog legs to the dining-room; they cost nothing. In the same way the vine growers in Burgundy ate snails which were ruining their vines.

Rabelais, the famed *fin bec*, was fond of wandering in this countryside, and he would go and drink the waters at Cauterets. Chateaubriand was another visitor of mark to this famous spa, and today it is the Mecca of professional men who have to count strongly on their vocal cords: orators, preachers, singers and lawyers may always be found drinking the sulfuric waters at Cauterets, one of the many watering places in the Pyrenees. It is not strange but interesting to note that in France, when there is a district known for its good cooking, not very far away there is a spa equally known for its curing qualities. It is, one supposes, the eternal law of supply and demand.

There are few districts in France where the cooking is not first-class, but wherever one may be, among the peasants or poorer classes in the cities, one remarks the enormous quantities of bread consumed. Bread is really and truly the staff of life of the French. Wise old saws, dating centuries back, are concerned with bread. "As good as bread," is one saying. Another: "As long as a day without bread." In many peasant homes in France the master

makes the sign of the cross with the point of a knife on the bread before beginning a meal.

During the past fifty years the consumption of meat in France has doubled itself, but even now the French eat far less meat than either the British or the Americans; they eat less fish, too, firstly because it is two and a half times as dear in France as it is in Great Britain or the United States. Paris, since the War, has increased its consumption of fish four times, but neither Paris nor the rest of France is properly provided with facilities for transporting fish from the seaports to the consumer. Frozen meat is practically unknown in France. The consumption of horse meat is high, and this, if the aforementioned informant is correct, can be traced to the hard times caused by wars.

Invasions dating centuries back have left everlasting imprints across the Southwest, from the Gulf of Gascony to the Gulf of the Lion. The Arabs came across the western Pyrenees as well as on the eastern side; the British, under Wellington, they have all left their mark. But mostly the British; they have influenced the commercial and social life, but physically the inhabitants of the Southwest owe their blue eyes to the invasions of the Visigoths and the Franks.

Cemeteries which hold British dead from the Peninsular War and the World War are to be found on the French side of the Pyrenees. In 1918 British conscientious objectors were unloading boats in Bayonne, that pretty city of arcades. The town of Pau possessed the only pack of foxhounds in France. When Wellington was fighting Napoleon, the Duke's staff officers hunted the fox and brought hounds from England. Hunting has continued uninterruptedly ever since, and for many years

the Master of Hounds was an American millionaire who made his home in Pau.

During the World War, when Spain was officially neutral, the Germans in that country caused a tremendous amount of damage to Allied shipping; they had submarine bases in Spain. North-bound convoys from the Mediterranean were convoyed by an aged British cruiser called the *Duke of Clarence*, stationed in French waters, usually between Saint Jean de Luz and Biarritz. The whole of the Franco-Spanish frontier was honeycombed with spies, and exciting times were had by all.

British Naval Intelligence had a gallant group of men watching British interests on this frontier, and if the British Admiralty would allow publication, stories of raids could be told which would make much fiction as pale as water compared to red wine. One day a German submarine bombarded Bayonne. It never came back; indeed this particular submarine never returned to its base. Its disappearance was, shall I say, organized by a British shipping clerk from Durham. A German wireless operator working from a church steeple just over the frontier on the Spanish side was sandbagged with a lady's silk stocking filled with sand from the seashore at Hendaye. O Hendaye, what excitement have you known?

Hendaye is a pretty little seaside resort on the frontier. During the War French deserters used to cross over into Spain just about here, and during the unrest through the years prior to the Spanish Revolution which cost King Alphonso his throne, Hendaye was the rallying spot for the rebels.

Caves, ravines, roaring waters, mule tracks, smugglers, hidden valleys, mountain passes, superstitious peasantry, all these make the Southwest of France one of the most romantic regions of France, if not the most romantic.

The Tour de France, the annual cycle race round France, probably the hardest test of endurance in the world, finds its peak, in every sense of the word, along the roads bordering the Pyrenees. These roads are hair-raising to racing cyclists; they are dangerous at every turn, arduous at every curve because of the climbing gradient, and yet few fail to make the grade. In the tiniest village which the cyclists have to traverse there is always a crowd, practically the whole of the population, turned out to cheer the racers, with an extra shout for the wearer of the yellow jersey which indicates the winner of the previous day's struggle. Italians, Belgians, and Swiss, as well as the French, take part in the Tour de France, which is unique. Newspapers send their correspondents and photographers in cars to follow the competitors round the country, columns and columns are devoted to the daily reports. Life stands still when the cyclists are awaited. The peasants lift their heads and smile and perhaps wave; oxen, patiently plodding, are drawn to the side of the road to allow an easier passage to the bent-back riders in multi-colored jerseys, like a horde of giant butterflies, whirling past; for the villagers and the peasants the passing cyclists represent something of the old-time gladiators, and in this Basque country of the Southwest they are romantics as well as realists.

We are among the Gascons, blood brothers of d'Artagnan, who rode his yellow steed to Paris and who fought, drank, and made love, as all good Gascons love to do. We are in the country of the troubadours, who wrote poems to their ladies' eyebrows, and who got drunk at Court and carried romance from duchy to duchy, when the whole of this country was split up into small kingdoms, just as Europe is split today into countries.

What times they must have been, when the troubadours

were in flower, when men set out from England to go Crusading and crossed the fair lands of France toward the East. Roads of romance criss-crossed the very country through which we are now traveling, yet romance did not die when the troubadours had sung their last song. Romance, like that once famous American tune, goes round and round, and it comes out pretty much at the same place where it went in.

But we have been talking too long; a little action, please!

We are on our way to Tarbes, remember. I last had you led up a mule track, looking at a hidden village; now we will return to the car and be on our way to Tarbes. You will notice that every place we visit *en route* has its healing waters; springs are as common as daisies in a field, the wonder is how they make enough money to keep going. There are nearly a dozen spas of international renown, but there are hundreds of national fame, and maybe nearer two hundred whose names are not known outside a radius of, say, five hundred miles; and yet every place spends money, every place, as you see, has its theater and casino and a group of hotels. They all charge a local tax, but that amounts to nothing more than a few pence per day. Many of the smaller places open in summer only, and there is telegraph and telephone service during the season; after that the local inhabitants can exist on their postal service, the trudging postman who wobbles his bicycle up paths where mules and perhaps angels might fear to tread.

These wonderful postmen! One never sees a young one; they seem to be born ancient, like their bicycles, real boneshakers. The rural postmen are the heroes of the countryside. Winter and summer alike, they turn out early in the morning and help sort the letters. Then they

set out on their push bikes, wheeling the *bécane* up tracks only fit for goats to walk, leaving their machines at the bottom of the hill, dropping letters into small wooden boxes slung on iron gates, a copy of *La Croix* for M. le Curé, a copy of *Le Temps* for the retired colonel who goes to Mass so regularly, a word to the grocer, an inquiry after the rheumatism of the old lady who lives in the lane, and all for a very few francs a month and a Christmas box, and a pension when the postman cannot work any more.

Tarbes, the county town of the Upper Pyrenees, stands on a high hill on the left bank of the river Adour. The town dominates a huge plain where tobacco grows and where there are vineyards and where they raise horses of a breed renowned. There are few very big French cities; Tarbes has not many more than 30,000 inhabitants, but there are ceramic factories and electrical works where much money is made.

Like many of the important cities of France, Tarbes had to do with the English who came here in 1360 and stayed for forty-six years. Before the English settled there, Montgomery took Tarbes and burnt the churches and the convents in no uncertain fashion. Just when the people began to drift back to Tarbes, Montamat, who had been one of Montgomery's henchmen, took the town and razed the fortifications and wrecked Tarbes completely. There was fighting in and around until the end of the sixteenth century. In 1814 the English were back again, fighting Napoleon and taking a beating. Thirty-seven years later, a very great French soldier, Marshal Foch, was born in Tarbes.

Today Tarbes leads a quiet sort of life, but devotes itself to Rugby football, and, as I have related, provided

most of the French international team when France had an international team.

Making for Toulouse, we take the road that goes eastward through Saint-Gaudens and then swings northward to Muret. Gascony has been rightly called a garden of romantic love. All through the Middle Ages, when along the very roads we tread, lovers rode palfreys to follow other men's wives visiting the courts of neighboring barons, the banners blazoned with Love were carried high. Today? Well, today palfreys are not in demand, a small car is more handy, the roads are no doubt better, more ground can be covered in a car than on a palfrey. Poems, hand-made, are not in demand either; there is always the telephone. The troubadour of this century does not strum an instrument, he switches on the radio in his car. He does not wear doublet and hose, his shoulders stretch between something off a peg. He does not wear his hair long, neither does his lady-love. Yet, could we affirm that the gallant young man is not a romantic? Of course he is! All Gascons are incurable romantics. They have it in their blood and cannot get away from romance, and I dare swear they do not want to do so.

In the bad old days a French husband of the noble class would spank his wife and send her to bed without any supper. Today he cannot do that, so she goes to the pictures and he stays home and listens to the radio. But things nevertheless were more difficult in those days. A husband who spanked his wife, with or without just cause, might quite possibly find that he had a war on his hands. But there were other complications: the wife could send for her favorite troubadour, tell him what had happened, and the troubadour would go round the country singing songs that held the irate husband up to ridicule. You had to stay right with the troubadours.

So things are that much better; no local wars because of marital unhappiness, and no rude songs—but stay, I am not quite so sure. Sometimes these rows make such a din that the relatives come in and husband and wife are parted. True, there are no local courts to be visited and to be sung to, but there is nothing to prevent the wife's boy friend going round to the local café and telling *her* version of the affair. Just as I said, romance never dies.

Toulouse is a marvelous city. Listed, I warrant you, merely as the seventh city of France, it ranks much higher in reality. It is a gay city, gay with the teeming life of its thousands of students; it is the headquarters of medical science, it is intellectual, historical in the sense that its history is not as dry as the dust one finds in most museums, but it is history that lives, or which can so easily be made to live.

Toulouse is first heard of as early as the third century before the Christian era. The Celts, driven out by the Germans, invaded Gaul; one of their tribes settled on the hills dominating the right bank of the river Garonne; this emplacement is today called Old Toulouse, but the Toulouse of today is not far away.

The Romans, wishing to open up direct communications with Spain, entered Gaul and built a fort when they occupied Toulouse. Then came the Visigoths from the edge of the Black Sea and took Rome and subsequently made Toulouse the capital of the Visigothian kingdom. For hundreds of years Toulouse knew the terrors of war; nevertheless, the city gradually became not only a great intellectual center, but also a rallying point for judicial and also religious life.

Apart from the rest of France, living in an entirely different world, Toulouse swung toward advanced liberalism, a mixture of communism and anarchism, before be-

coming, as it is today, the stronghold of radicalism. When Joseph Caillaux, ex-Premier, was tried by the High Court and banished from his constituency in Mamers and from the Paris region, he settled in Toulouse, where is published *La Dépêche*, one of the most important newspapers in France, comparatively the French *Manchester Guardian*.

In the seventeenth century Toulouse was fanatical, it burnt one of its doctors alive. Late in the eighteenth century a man named Calas, accused of having murdered his son, was crushed to death. Voltaire interceded on behalf of the widow, and Calas was "rehabilitated," as they say, a process which seems to me to have been of little use to Monsieur Calas.

Toulouse still kept its keenness for blood, and we find that right at the close of the eighteenth century Toulouse guillotined fifty-three Members of Parliament. Naturally, we find the English not far from Toulouse. Wellington fought Marshal Soult in April, 1814, just to the north of the city. The battle cost 12,000 lives.

That was the last battle fought near Toulouse, the last, in fact, of the fighting that southwest France has seen. Toulouse could henceforth devote itself to intellectual pastimes.

Toulouse knows how to display its charms to the thousands of tourists who pour through the city from one year's end to the other. Every house or building of interest has a tablet which tells the story in brief. A visitor in a hurry need only take a cab and tell the driver to go round the city. Most of the drivers are exceedingly intelligent and are the best of guides. But even wandering on foot can be amusing and interesting. Toulouse is famed for its violets and its geese. The violets are grown in the countryside around the city and the flowers are attractively

packed in fancy boxes, often in handboxes like those that come from the milliner's. The production of violets is so intensive that, apart from selling the fresh and delicately scented flowers, they also crystallize the leaves and export them all over the world. Crystallized eucalyptus is another specialty of Toulouse. No visitors should leave the city without eating of the *cassoulet*. Properly served it should come to the table in a round earthenware dish in which it has been cooked. The ingredients are small cubes of pork, cooked together with small pieces of goose and those large, white, dried beans known as *haricots blancs*.

The center of life is the Place Wilson, formerly known as the Place Lafayette. When the French thought that Wilson could be accepted at his own estimate, as the Messiah who had come to cure war-stricken France, they started honoring his name by renaming streets, squares, avenues and boulevards after him; France became Wilson logged. Even when the bubble burst, the French, with their usual cynical outlook, just shrugged their shoulders, made a ribald joke or two, and retained the innumerable "Wilson" thoroughfares. Some towns, where the mayors had lost their sense of humor, scratched out the Wilson, but Toulouse did not.

The Place Wilson teems with life, the square is bordered with large cafés and hotels. Students of all nations make the big open spaces hum with their jokes and their quips. You will see them at nightfall in the cafés, sipping beer, playing chess, laughing, arguing, flirting, living. A dark young Czech is intent on his game with a Chinaman; in this far-off city on the Garonne, youth meets youth in an atmosphere mellowed by a colorful past.

Toulouse has one of the first and best broadcasting stations in France. The calling note is a sweet-toned bell,

and then the announcer says: "Radio Toulouse." I close my eyes when I hear these words, and I see green fields and rolling plains, a large gray city beside a wide, sweeping gray river. There is bustle enough in the evenings, but in the daytime there is the calm one finds in intellectual cities the world over.

One night late I stood on the station platform waiting for the midnight express to Paris. There were many fellow-passengers, the platform filled up rapidly. Presently through the gate there came two porters carrying a stretcher. They put the stretcher down on the platform. On the stretcher was what remained of a man, so frail, so thin and brittle-looking he seemed as if he might break at a touch. His eyes were bright and deep sunken, and his face was white wax. He was wrapped in blankets which could not hide the frailness of his body. I looked at his hands, which were long with tapering fingers, but they looked like white marble veined with blue. He wore a cap which did not hide his rather longish fair hair. There was a long whistle announcing the approaching train, and the porters came back to lift the stretcher into a carriage. As they did so I heard the wail of a puling infant, and I saw a woman in black carrying a child a week or so old, and she climbed into the train.

In the morning we arrived in Paris. The pale man in the stretcher was dead, but the infant carried by the woman in black was still crying. That is another picture I see, and always shall see, when I switch on my radio and hear the call: "Radio Toulouse."

On the Place St. Sernin, one of the many saints closely connected with Toulouse, you will come across a private house built by the Count Jean du Barry, more familiarly known as "le Roué." The unsaintly count had a mistress named Jeanne Becu, and in order to obtain a title for her,

he gave her to Louis XV; thus having made the lady the foundation of his fortunes, he married her to his brother Guillaume. A very unsavory story, I grant you.

Toulouse is, I think, the only city in the world which possesses a church named after a bull. The church is Our Lady of Taur, named after the bull which was the cause of the martyrdom of Saint Saturnin, who is buried in the church.

Although we are so close to Spain, the bull fight, when it comes to France, does not occur in this part of the country. You find bull fights in Arles and in Nîmes and sometimes along the Mediterranean coast.

III

SNAILS, TRUFFLES, AND TRAMS

IT matters little which way we travel to Bordeaux from our last excursions in the Southeast; it is certain that whichever roads we take will lead us through the vineyards, where the heady odor of pressed grapes will be fragrant in our nostrils. We shall find on the roads men carrying curious cylindrical tanks on their backs, tanks with hose attachments, and the men will be spectacled and hatted to protect them from the fumes of the chemical contents of the instruments on their backs, and there will be a light green crust on the tanks. The men may appear to you as something grim; then there will come to you in a flash the thought that these men resemble in some way photographs of soldiers in the World War who were carrying out gas attacks. There is a resemblance, but there is nothing sinister or grim in the mission of these men; they are certainly out to make an attack, but it is on the fly, the pest which destroys the vines.

The end of the Prohibition era in the United States recreated an interest in grape growing, although even during the time of Prohibition the culture of the grape was almost fully sustained in California; but in the East, in the States of New York and New Jersey, I found in 1936 a praiseworthy attempt to cultivate the grape and produce a local wine, of the champagne type, and very good I found it. What a pity that England is not interested in growing grapes out of doors, and particularly not interested in creating a wine industry. In England we have

our cowslip wine and our elderberry wine, although I believe both these pastoral beverages are dying out; but there are no reasons I know why we should not have a local wine culture. Other nations, the Japanese in particular, who "enjoy" a climate of vigor equal to the British, have nevertheless in recent years produced in commercial quantities a tropical fruit, the orange, and strawberries of a pleasant flavor.

The culture of the grape extends from Portugal to Turkey, and every country in Southern or Middle Europe produces wine both for home consumption and for export. Many and many a book has been written about wine, many a song and poem been sung and declaimed in praise of the wreath of Bacchus; it is not my intention to add one word more, but merely to call attention to the well-known fact that good wine produces good fellowship and a mellowness unknown to the consumers of beer or brandy.

The same idea may well be carried further. Not only is the consumer imbued with good fellowship when the columns are charged, but my personal observation teaches me that the very men and women who work on the soil which grows the grape and produces this succulent combination of southern sunshine and water—for the grape, like the melon and the cucumber, consists of naught else—reveal characteristics not shared with other peasants; those who pick hops, sow potatoes, reap corn, do not as a rule reveal traits of virtue equal to those one finds reaping the harvest in the vineyards. All over Europe there are festivals connected with the harvest of the grape, but none more picturesque or colorful than the French. From time to time in France there are spasmodic attempts to intensify the worship of the grape, to drive home its virtues as a cure for various ills of the flesh. In several Paris railway stations girls in regional costumes serve glasses of

fresh grape juice, and there has been propaganda extolling the grape, but these trials are merely a tithe of what is needed to make people of all walks of life aware of the gratitude mankind owes to the grape; but I must be careful or else I shall be accused of making capital out of a personal belief.

Unfortunately a vineyard does not lend itself to valuable pictorial propaganda. The first time I looked at a vineyard in the South of France I was disappointed, and I have never recovered from my disappointment. Look yourself and you will remark that the grapes are not in luscious bunches, as we are accustomed to see them in nice markets; they are puny little things, hardly bigger than currants. The fact is that the grapes grown for making wine are wine grapes and not intended for eating purposes. That is all the difference, but it is an important difference.

Where it is hot, vines are planted practically anywhere, but when it is necessary to obtain all the sun possible, you will notice the vines on the hillsides, and on artificially created terraces, where the grapes get the full benefit of the sun.

There is dust everywhere, you will remark, as we drive through the countryside south of Toulouse, through Muret to Lombez, then to Auch, and to Orthez, where we find a friendly farm housekeeper who sets a table for us in the shade and who gives us an omelette and a roast chicken and a salad which she mixes herself, and a nasty pot of coffee, thus confounding the oft-heard but untrue statement that the only good coffee in the world is to be found in France. Like the little girl who had a curl which hung in the middle of her forehead, when it is good it is very very good, but when it is bad it is horrid.

Orthez is one of those places which were once important, but today there are only a handful of inhabitants

who live on and from the soil and are happy children of nature. In this haphazard tour of France we obviously continue to come across glimpses of a country we would have had hidden from our eyes if we had not with us the means to see rather more than usual. The means I have in my modest mind are simple enough: they may be summed up in the word intelligence. Provided we have with us a person speaking French, and we broaden our mind to the fullest extent, France is our oyster, and there will be an R in every month.

You will notice as we go through the villages that there is a surprising lack of sanitation; women come out and throw their slops on the cobbles and let the water trickle over the camber of the road back into the gutter, where the stream will meander on, mingling with other streams of slops and will at last casually fall into a hole. You will notice, too, I have no doubt, that when you stop for midday dinner and wish to wash your hands, the lavatories are next door or very close to the kitchen. That is just the logical conclusion of a French mind which does not desire to encounter what he or she considers entirely unnecessary expense in plumbing. Water is required in the kitchen. Very good, let us install it in the kitchen. Water the guests will require to wash their hands. *Soit*, but please place it as near to the kitchen as possible, because plumbers charge so much a meter for their pipes, and *parbleu*, the nearer to the source, the fewer francs it will cost.

On the other hand, if the *patron* does not "put in" water in the kitchen, it will be drawn from a well in the garden, and you will wash your hands in a tiny basin hung on the wall, and the towel will be a communal one, and there will be no soap.

But in all probability the meal will be most excellent.

Always remember not to ask for an expensive wine or for one which appeals to you because the name is sonorous, or which you believe to be well known; well-known wines depend on the particular year the wine went into the bottle, and not on the name; ask the person who is serving at table to recommend a *vin du pays*, and you will remember the tip with gratitude. I mean the tip I have just given you; the other one will probably not be remembered, being just part of the day's work.

If you happen to pull up at the best hotel in the little town where you decide to lunch, you will be sure to find somewhere in the middle of the room a table patronized by sad-looking men. They are not particularly sad, really, or not more so than you and I would be if we had to share a meal every day. It is the table of the regular customers; not transients as we are, but the local doctor, the chemist, a lawyer or two, two or three civil servants—naturally, because one of every three Frenchmen *is* a civil servant—and any other professional men who happen to live there; and there is almost sure to be a retired military officer who will glower at the curé on the days he lunches there; but that will not be often, because the curé will have a small house which will not be too uncomfortable, and he will have a garden where he will grow his peaches and his apricots, a cherry tree or two, and there will be a buxom but elderly servant who cooks just the meals M. le Curé likes, and on the table there will be a decent bottle of wine, because down in the cellar there will be bottles of excellent *cuvées* sent to the curé from the house up the hill.

So it is, my masters, and so it has been ever since and also before Flaubert wrote *Madame Bovary*, and if you have read the book you will be able, almost, to pick out the types sitting round the table; and if you have followed my advice and broadened your mind and used the intelli-

gence that the good God gave you, it will come to you just what there is about the face of France that makes you like it; it is the fact that France is eternal, like her running brooks, her mountains and her forests. And then, if you are wise, you will drink *un petit verre d'Armagnac*, and thank your Maker for the sunshine, and go outside to the car and drive on toward the sunset and Saint Jean de Luz.

Perhaps because we are so near Spain, or because of the romantic qualities of the Basques themselves, who have provided so many of the priests, soldiers and sailors of France, this part of the country makes, I feel sure, an irresistible appeal to the senses. It is beautiful, in the best use of that overworked word. In color it is golden and purple, the sky is turquoise blue, the sands of the coast are the gold that makes golden, and the hillsides are purple and the sea is emerald. But that emerald sea can be very dangerous. I suppose there are very few parts of the French coast where the sea can be so treacherous. I remember once when a traveling theatrical company arrived at Biarritz on a Sunday, and some half-dozen members of the company took a walk along the raised rocky platform toward the Port d'Espagne. A wave came up and neatly licked all six off the rock and washed them out to sea and drowned them.

But these things can be guarded against, and the municipalities have "life guards" watching the safety of the bathers.

The history of the now fashionable Saint Jean de Luz does not show up anywhere, or among the crowds of bathers and golfers, or with those who go off to see a game of pelota, one of the fastest and most fascinating games to be found anywhere. The town jumped into importance when Eleanor of Aquitaine, a gay young woman, married Henry Plantagenet and united Saint Jean de Luz

with England. That was somewhere in the twelfth century, but three hundred years later sailors of the city went out and took Fontarrabie, which is today just over the Spanish frontier on the way to San Sebastian. Fortune followed fortune for nearly sixty years, and then the Spaniards came over and burned and sacked the town. But the Spaniards only managed to stay one year.

Sailors from Saint Jean de Luz were the first Frenchmen to go fishing off Newfoundland, and until the Treaty of Utrecht was signed, when France lost Newfoundland, the prosperity of Saint Jean was at its height. Then it dropped away until the sunshine and the sea and the mountains and the rivers brought foreigners from all over the world. It is the prosperity of peace now, and may it continue even longer than the prosperity of foreign wars.

We will turn north and run near the sea to Biarritz, which had a long run of fun and fortune when the Prince of Wales who is now the Duke of Windsor used to go there and spend a part of the summer. It is a countryside much beloved of authors, and at Cambo Edmond Rostand used to live, and there he wrote that extraordinary farm-yard play *Chanteclair*.

The quickest way to Bordeaux, whither we are heading, is along the almost straight national road. It is a beautiful road through the Landes, that country of sweet-smelling pines and hundreds of miles of forest land; but I do not like the obvious, and therefore we will see a part of this section of France by following the national road so long as it acutely parallels the Gulf of Gascony, and then we will take a side road and travel slowly through the more thickly populated district southeast of Bordeaux. We can "carry on" to Bergerac, another region famous for its wine, and we can look at Périgord, sometimes called the cradle of

civilization, and we can watch that little-known sport, truffle hunting.

I notice that every now and again I halt you to discuss wine or food, or both. Périgord, apart from truffles, specializes in goose livers; not in the *pâté*, as Strasbourg does, but in the liver served hot, most often with truffles and a Madeira wine sauce. It is actually quite the richest dish I know, and one which it is well not to eat a quarter of an hour before retiring. The truffle is "hunted" by pigs which have rings placed through their snouts. The wise pig trots off into the forest, followed by the owner of the sagacious animal who stops when he "points" a truffle, found at the foot of a tree. There the pig begins to dig for the big black tuber, but the ring through the snout is naturally placed there so that the pig cannot eat his find which is placed in a basket and ends its journey cleaned and sliced and mixed with goose liver or thrust into boned turkeys at cocktail parties.

I find the subject of food fascinating and even romantic. The snail, which, incidentally, is not a friend of mine, is prepared for table in a manner most succinct. I believe there is a school of thought which thinks a snail purveyor merely goes out into the garden and finds snails and sends them to market. Snails are bred and looked after as carefully as any other animal intended for the table of epicures. The finest French snails are bred in Burgundy, where they feed on vine leaves. When the time comes for the snail to be prepared for market, he is given a strong dose of common salt; the intention is—don't listen, ladies—to make the snail sick and so remove from him any impurities. The cleansed snail is now cooked and mixed with him is chopped parsley, butter and garlic. But we have wandered from truffles.

Nobody, I imagine, could call Bordeaux a beautiful city,

but its importance to France can be overlooked by none. It is a city bound closely to the traditions of France. It is recorded that after Charlemagne had tried to kill his father he went to Bordeaux, and being banished from Gaul, he traveled into Spain and took service there and converted his master's daughter from paganism and then took her to Bordeaux and married her.

Bordeaux is rich; it has always been, even when the Romans were there. There was a princess of Rome who wanted a short cut to the sea; possibly, like myself, she hated the Bordeaux trams, and she had built a special road which went twenty miles or more to the spot where the princess delighted to bathe. There were poets as well as princesses at Bordeaux, and the troubadours used to travel out to the lovely town of Blaye, some way out of the city.

For hundreds of years Bordeaux was an English city. The British might not have made the city wealthy, but they preserved the wealth. Their ships carried away the wine and the brandy and the olive oil from the hinterland of Bordeaux, across the waters of the broad-bosomed Gironde, and between the brown hills. English merchants went to settle in Bordeaux, and shippers opened offices there, and wealth grew and grew. It is not so wealthy now, but no French city is as wealthy as it used to be. Wars and hard times have made people retrench, and, besides, there is much competition in commerce; but even if there are few or no English merchants in Bordeaux today, the life of the lively city continues.

It is the custom in France to refer to this or that city as "*un petit Paris*." The phrase has no very deep meaning; it really means noise and cafés and cinemas and movement. You find all this in the Place des Quinconces, plenty of light and life, and ugly Bordelaise girls with handsome figures, and trams, and trams, and trams.

Bordeaux still buys claret from the peasants in the hinterland and sells it again to French and foreign merchants. You have only to walk, after dodging the death-dealing trams, along the quays and see the boats being loaded up, and to smell the heady perfume of the wine already packed into crates, to realize that Bordeaux is still selling claret, and you can climb a tower and look over a part of the hinterland yourself and note the noble sweep of the river Gironde and the green miles of vineyards. That is all very well, but if you value your life, if you would see your home again, do not try to drive a motor car through the streets of Bordeaux. It has been done. I understand that a man who could not see once drove a tram through the streets of Bordeaux one night during a tram strike. But it has not been accomplished since.

When I was young and more or less innocent, I once gaily started to drive through Bordeaux. I served my apprenticeship in driving through tram-infested streets when I tackled Amiens one wet Thursday afternoon. But Bordeaux! You may know that in many civilized cities the trams drive along the extreme right- and left-hand sides of the roads, bordering the sidewalks, and all business traffic runs between the trams, in the center section of the road. But not in Bordeaux; oh, dear, no.

When the City Fathers of Bordeaux decided to lay down tram lines I suppose the city was so rich that they engaged puzzle experts from all over the world, or maybe they were only just lunatic draftsmen from the local asylum. The idea was simple in its lunacy. The lines are looped. You are driving along peacefully, and, perhaps, singing a stave because you are so pleased to be leaving Bordeaux *en route* for something more pleasant. You, being in France, are driving on the right, and you will be close to the curb. Coming toward you, on the opposite and there-

fore on the left-hand side, is a yellow or brown tram; it is coming fast, but what should you care? There is the width of a wide street between you and the tram. Or there was. One of your back-seat drivers will prod you in the back and yelp, and not too soon either, for that yellow or brown tram which was until a few seconds ago the width of a wide street from you, is now clanging a bell and bearing down on you for a head-on collision. You jam on your brake, your engine stalls, fifty-five thousand people shout advice, you put your engine in reverse. One hundred and five thousand people shout advice, and this does not include the back-seat drivers, for right at the back of you and bearing down on you with terror is a yellow or brown tram. You can either go mad and charge a tram, or else you can burst into tears and sob on the steering wheel; in either case two hundred and fifty thousand people will give you advice, and a Bordeaux policeman will threaten to fine you.

But, nevertheless, I must really permit myself a word or two of criticism. I find the Bordeaux tramway service rather antiquated. They have delightfully looped their lines, so that unless you hang your head through the wind-screen you cannot see at what moment a tram is going to charge you. But there is one thing that has not been thought of, and which, unless I am seriously mistaken, puts the Bordeaux tram service extremely out of date.

The City Fathers have omitted to arrange so that their trams can charge you sideways.

IV

PAGES OF LIVING HISTORY

FROM Toulouse, going southeast to Carcassonne, the face of France shows some variation. Until we approach Castelnaudary there are no signs of forest land such as we have seen throughout our trip from Lourdes. We climb steadily until we reach Villefranche-de-Laugais, where Wellington and Soult signed the Armistice in 1814 after the Battle of Toulouse. Here the road begins to descend toward the Mediterranean.

It is a warm, arid and somewhat sleepy countryside, still very mountainous. On many a hilltop there are ruins of fifteenth-century castles which themselves were built on the sites of ruined twelfth-century castles, and they in turn, so local gossip has it, were raised on the places where the Saracen invaders built their forts. It is quite probable that these were taken over from the Visigoths, who quite possibly obtained them from the first invaders of Gaul, the Romans. Sooner or later, everything traces back to the Romans.

Footpaths, extremely difficult to follow, will take one to out-of-the-way places where tourists seldom go. Here life is just as it was hundreds of years ago. The people speak a *patois* we cannot understand, they know nothing of telephones or telegrams, newspapers, sanitation or cinemas, electricity or running water. They may occasionally receive a letter, that is their only contact with the outside world, except when a young son of the soil is called to the colors; he becomes a *bleu*, a conscript. The older men will get him drunk on young wine when he receives his

railway pass. Then he travels with a paper parcel of food to his barracks. Likely enough he will never have seen a train or a motor car. He will learn enough French to talk to his comrades, he will learn how to brush his teeth and to wash his body, and sometimes he will go home *en permission*, on furlough, wearing a blue uniform a little too big for him, and the older men who remember their army days will buy him *vermouth cassis*, and wink and ask what the "big numbers" are like in whatever garrison town the boy may be stationed. And the boy will go back to finish with being a soldier, and then he will come back again *en civil*, and he will forget all about brushing his teeth and washing his body; he will go native again, but will be none the worse for that.

Sometimes when he is back on the land he will think of the barracks, the strong black coffee, the long marches in the early mornings, and the free evenings when a little money had come from home; the letter written by the curé. The evenings when three or four of them would go out in the dusk and walk in the street of the whispering women, the houses where the numbers were three and four times the ordinary size. The tolerated houses where sexual intercourse is marked up on a cash register. "Did Monsieur have two *fines* and one woman, or was it two women and one *fine*?" The warm stink of the houses, the stocky women in short skirts with petticoats hanging below the hem. Army days and nights.

There are two very distinct Carcassonnes; there is the so-called "Lower Town," and the old Roman Carcassonne called the Cité. The river Aude divides the two towns, but although the Roman city stands high on a hill, and in the photographs it looks as if one could not avoid seeing it, the first time I came hereabouts I departed and spent the night in Narbonne.

The French peasants have many fine qualities, but few are blessed with a well-developed bump of locality. To inquire the way from a peasant is a risky proceeding; he is likely to give a perfectly incorrect reply, which wastes time and petrol, or he may smile pityingly and say: "*Vous tournez le dos.*" You are turning your back to it. Perhaps you are, and you turn the car round and you retrace your route and you look for the turning you have been told to take and you follow it and reach your destination after you have discovered that if you had gone a few hundred yards further than where you were when you inquired, you would have reached a road and a signpost which would have brought you quickly enough to where you wanted to go. I have been caught so often by the back-turning business, and no doubt I shall continue to be caught. It arises from the fact that the peasant is a very local person. He will never use an expression such as "as the crow flies." No crows fly for him. His father and his grandfather took a certain path; there may be others, he will concede you that, but they do not interest him.

I once had the pleasure of driving across France with a very famous motorist. He spoke French well, fine academic French. We started from Calais, and my friend would slow down and stop beside a peasant on the highway, sweep off his hat and say: "*Pardon, Monsieur, voulez-vous avoir l'obligeance de m'indiquer la route pour . . .*"

We did that all the first day, and perhaps during the morning of the second day; of that I am not quite sure, but I do remember that my friend very soon just slowed down a bit, and with his hat still on, he would remove his pipe from his mouth and shout, say, "Rouen?" with a jerk of his pipe in the presumed direction of the

town. The passing peasant never had any time to tell us we were turning our backs to anything. He either nodded his head or just looked blank.

When I was looking for the Roman city of Carcassonne, I kept inquiring from locals. I found the "Lower Town" easily enough, and there were hotels in plenty, very nice hotels, but I wanted to sleep in the ancient Cité, as the Romans used to do. My family begged me to desist from giving an imitation of a squirrel in a cage; I kept going round and round, and round and round again. I was in a maze, and I simply could not find what I was looking for. I asked policemen and garage keepers, and nondescript persons; I must have asked quite a dozen people, and they all told me; that is just where the trouble came in. They all had something different to say. You see, the French are individualists, especially when giving passing motorists directions, and my family was becoming hysterical, and we went up a hill and down a hill, and backwards and forwards, and the sun went down, and people went home and ate their supper, and still I was looking for the Roman city of Carcassonne. I was begged to stop and eat, but that was just the salt to put on the bird's tail. If I had weakened thus far, I should have found that rooms had been booked and I would have put my head on a pillow that was not in the Roman Cité. In the end, as I have told, we went to Narbonne and spent the night there, and for a very long time I never saw the Roman Cité of Carcassonne.

When you look at it, you wonder how anybody *could* miss it, it is so large; the circular outer walls and the terraced houses give Carcassonne almost the appearance of an acropolis. It was left alone for many, many years, an ancient town inhabited only by bats and rats and mice. Then it was partially restored and publicized, as we

should say in these days. This relic of an old civilization became a magnet for tourists from all over the world. They built hotels, and people from the four corners of the earth jostled elbows in the narrow, winding streets which used to echo to the tramp of marching Romans.

Carcassonne was colonized by Julius Cæsar. You have only to take a look at the rocky mountain on which the city is built to realize it is the sort of place Julius Cæsar would have colonized. Its military importance leaps to the eye, as the French say. It is possible that when the Romans invaded Gaul and built their road which was to link the Roman Empire with Spain, the Gauls themselves dug themselves in on the mountain, which commanded the fording passage of the river Aude. Something more than three hundred years later the Visigoths, sweeping down from the Baltic, settled in Carcassonne and built the walls which have lasted, in part at least, until this very day.

Hundreds of pages of history have been lived in this district. When William the Conqueror was fighting the Battle of Hastings, Carcassonne was sold to Barcelona—then taken back. Year after year, and for hundreds of years, there were battles, and the tide of fate rolled backwards and forwards and around the walled city of Carcassonne. Our old friend the Black Prince burned the Lower Town in the middle of the fourteenth century, but he dared not attack the walled and grim city on the hill, even though our Prince devastated the whole of the province of Languedoc.

When Joan of Arc was beating the English, and when strife tore France, Carcassonne remained faithful to the King of France. During the Religious Wars Carcassonne held out against the Huguenots.

The Roman Cité and the Lower Town were at war

after the death of Henri III, when the Lower Town rallied to the standard of the King of Navarre, and the Roman Cité linked up with the so-called League. Not until very near the end of the eighteenth century was there peace between the Upper and the Lower Carcassonnes, and then the archives of the old town were solemnly burnt, and the towns were reunited; but that was the end for very many years of the city on the hill.

Now you have running hot and cold water, radio, dance teas, and all "modern comforts" in old Carcassonne. But perhaps when the tourists sleep, the ghosts of the old Romans once again tread the narrow, winding streets, once again the Black Prince rides, and archers shoot their deadly shafts at the flying foe. Who knows?

The Lower Town does not worry about the city on the hill; why, they are not too sure where it is! For the inhabitants, the tourists mean nothing at all. They go "up there," and heads nod toward a vague place. Here in the Lower Town, as you remark, they are intent on their olives, their vineyards and their fields. This is the France of today. But is it? Is it possible that all the history lived hereabouts, the wars, invasions, burnings, have passed away without leaving something behind, something indefinite perhaps, but something physical or mental that lives today in the life-blood of the people? Personally, I feel sure that history lives outside of museums and picture galleries and musty volumes.

Scoff if you like, but listen to this: in the castle on the hill is a place called the Big Well. Today it is covered in with an iron grill and there is nothing to see but weeds. There is a legend that deep below in the well is an underground passage which leads to a huge grotto where the fairies live. There is another legend that the Visigoths threw a large part of their treasures into the well before

they were forced to leave Carcassonne. During the early part of the nineteenth century some hard-headed business men formed a liability company to dry up the well and search for the treasure. All they found were a number of arrowheads and some medals. No sign of any treasure; but, at some time or other, it is quite evident that this underground sanctuary had a meaning.

The valley of the Aude is one of the most beautiful in France. Agriculturally rich, but it is sparsely populated. The birth rate in France is falling so rapidly that one must sometimes pause and wonder what will be the fate of this large and beautiful country eventually; but, thank Heaven, there are still sufficient people in France to last out our time. Small as the population is today, it was of a certainty very much smaller when the country's history, or at least its more picturesque history, was being lived.

We will journey now toward Narbonne, the center of the wine trade. But wine is not all they care about around here. Olive oil is in itself an industry, and the mulberry trees support thousands of silkworms. Narbonne is noisy, Narbonne is socialistic; it gave France her first Jewish Prime Minister, and he is a Socialist; and Narbonne, some years ago, fought the Government soldiers. The South was stirred to revolt over a question of the adulteration of the wine. Thousands of soldiers garrisoned in Narbonne, and the inhabitants were fleeing for safety. There had been shooting and ten or twelve of the rioters were killed. It was the gravest incident France had known since the foundation of the Third Republic, and it should still be an object lesson. Remember, when the Midi moves, as they say. It takes a good deal to start these Southerners moving, but when they do they will stand up to the Devil himself.

Looking at the plain which is back of Narbonne, the whole countryside appears like one gigantic vineyard. The climate is dry and hot, and the white dust is scattered and drawn up in choking clouds by the wind known locally as the *marin*, something like the Mediterranean *mistral*, and just as annoying.

Narbonne, like all the other southern cities of France, was invaded and conquered by the Romans, but Narbonne also suffered from the ravages of the Arabs who, after having trampled over Spain, invaded Gaul. There are still very obvious traces of Africa to be seen in the faces of many Narbonnais. The troubadours always made Narbonne one of their centers, and Jean Estève and Guiraud Riquier, famous troubadours, were born in Narbonne.

From Narbonne there are numerous quiet roads to Perpignan which pass between the salt marshes and the sea. Perpignan is typical of any city situated on the eastern Pyrenees, but of all the lovely cities in these parts, commend me to Montpellier. I suppose in all countries one visits there remain one or two fixed in memory for all time. Montpellier has all the charm one is accustomed to associate with a city which lives an intellectual as well as a business life. The University of Montpellier does not enjoy the reputation to which it is undoubtedly entitled, the city does not attract the tourist traffic which goes to so many other places within a radius which is comparatively small, and yet, to set down in so many words the charm of Montpellier is difficult. Maybe it is the feeling that one is somewhat off the well-defined traveled track, maybe it is the shaded square where the band plays, or is it the attraction of sympathetic feeling? A nice comfortable town is Montpellier, neither large nor small. It has much of the atmosphere of an English cathedral

city—Bath, Lincoln, or Ely; it is perhaps Boston on a much reduced scale. It is, well, it just is Montpellier.

We have spent so much time journeying from Lourdes to Montpellier, and I trust you have enjoyed the journey as much as I have, that we shall have to move somewhat faster if we are going to the shore where the Atlantic thunders, and where the breakers may make us forget this terrific heat. The white dust clogs our throats, and we drink the *petit vin du pays* with gratitude.

“Deep drink while the sunshine the wine does enhance” may have pleased the poet, but only a very light wine should be drunk by foreigners while the sun beats down. The man of the local soil is well protected against ill effects; his fathers and forefathers have drunk hearty, but the foreigner, and I mean foreigner just as much in the local sense—the man who was not born in this locality—should beware, take care that nothing stronger than a Roussillon is poured down his parched throat while the burning sun of the Midi scorches. I often think of the saying that many dig their graves with their teeth, a saying often quoted by people reproached for drinking. How true or false is this statement in France? We are now in the land of cooking with olive oil and saffron and garlic. It is the land—and I am being local—of good eating and good drinking; but I doubt whether either the townsmen or the peasant overeats, and I am certain he does not overdrink. The Englishman and the American look on the French as big eaters, but compared to the Anglo-Saxon they are small eaters, and most certainly they drink less. On the other hand, it is a little-known fact that the Spaniard, just over on the other side of those scraggy Pyrenees, is a very big eater indeed.

To digress for one moment only: A full Spanish lunch, eaten about the middle of the afternoon, will quite likely

consist of soup, fish or eggs, both roast mutton and roast beef, and poultry or pork.

The Gascon and his confrères eat sparingly enough, except at the time of the *vendanges*, a right royal roystering time, when both the wine and the wit are in. When the grapes are picked and ready to be crushed, that is the time for merrymaking, dancing, feasting, love-making, bull-fighting, drinking. The meals go on and on like a Normandy wedding feast. Visitors from England or America who are fortunate enough to witness these junketings are apt to remark "How French!"—a comment which always makes me smile a little. Have they heard of Simon de Montfort, one wonders, a Frenchman who once did quite a lot of fighting round these parts. Simon de Montfort founded the British Parliament, which an Englishman always likes to hear called the Mother of Parliaments. So it is, but French was the language of the Mother of Parliaments for the first hundred years of its existence.

Journeying toward the west we encounter many places whose names are familiar enough, Armagnac, for instance. It gives its name to a liquor which is less renowned outside of France than it deserves to be. All through the Midi it is as well known as its more famous brother Cognac, but Armagnac appeared on the table of Henri IV and remained on the tables of the kings of France until there were no more.

François I was born at Cognac. Civil wars ravaged this delightful country. Louis I, Prince of Condé, took Cognac sometime in the sixteenth century. At Jarnac, not far away, the Reformers were crushed and the Prince assassinated. One hundred years later the Grand Condé besieged Cognac; the town had remained one of the four places where the Protestants were in sanctuary, but the

Edict of Nantes put an end to its prosperity, and the religious wars and disorders brought about by economic disturbances made the former prosperity a mere shell. Phylloxera, a disease which spells ruin to vineyards, almost put Cognac off the map as a great brandy-producing center. For a while no more Cognac brandy was distilled. In those days my compatriots were brandy drinkers; whisky was practically unknown in the British Isles, outside of Scotland. It is a fact that the wave of phylloxera which swept over the Cognac district made England a country of whisky drinkers. Nowadays they still distill brandy at Cognac, but alas, all is not genuine Cognac that is so labeled.

The ground we are now covering is rich in romance, for here again are the trails of the troubadours. A famous troubadour was born in the town of Blaye, which is just outside Bordeaux. His name was Jaufre Rudel and he lived in the twelfth century and loved the Princess of Tripoli whom he had never seen. The lady was married, and it is written that gaily the troubadour set out for Tripoli, on the shores of Africa, and there died. There is no proof that the expedition was ever undertaken, but there are records that Rudel knew Geoffrey of Anjou, brother to Richard Cœur de Lion, the Lion-hearted Richard of England, who went crusading and brought back stories of the wondrous beauty of the princess.

The road the troubadours traveled was the road we are traveling back from Toulouse. From the southwest a cool breeze will blow from the not far distant mountains where bear may still be hunted. The breeze will shift the white dust, the dust that requires washing away in the evening with quaffs of the rich wines which abound. There are local wines which do not travel well, and which should be drunk on the spot, in quiet cafés, or as quiet

as they may be with the humming chatter of these descendants of d'Artagnan. When not hurrying, as we are not hurrying, it is well to ask our landlord to make us a few sandwiches to stuff in our pockets; they will not be dainty productions like the sandwiches you obtain from the corner drug-store, or the Lyons shop; you will not be asked if you want them on white bread or rye. They will be made of *pain de ménage*, or household bread, cut rather thick, or they may be made from one of those long rolls called *baguette*, a wand, and between the bread there may be *rosbif*, more likely ham, and most unlikely chicken.

Take the sandwiches with you and go walking—gentle exercise when the sun is on the wane, certainly not earlier—and climb, if you can, in order to obtain a view, and the view will be, as Herr Baedeker remarks somewhere, “rewarding.” Walk until you are very thirsty, and then look for a place which discreetly announces One May Bring to Eat. Then enter and seat yourself on a wooden trestle before a green wood table. Presently, if God is good, a man or woman will appear, not hastily nor servilely, but nonchalantly. Order then a bottle of whatever is recommended to you and glasses, and rejoice, and eat your sandwiches. And order another bottle.

Many an old town sleeps peacefully on a hill. No road goes anywhere near, but it does not matter, the inhabitants do not mind. Their grandfathers were there long before you passed this way, and their grandchildren will be there long after you have passed on. That is France.

The land was rich in the twelfth century, far richer than it is today. The peasants shipped their goods to England, and the country had been in the hands of the English for some years. Towns were built and rebuilt somewhere else. They must have been something like the Hollywood “sets” of today; they probably looked

more permanent than they were. Richard going crusading stayed for a while and built himself a town just as today a wealthy man builds himself a country cottage or a shooting box.

The blustering Gascons are worthy descendants of those who sat below the salt and listened to the songs the troubadours made for their ladies while the minstrels strummed in a gallery above. They hunted the wild boar even as they hunt him now in the Forest of the Landes, that vast forest, forty times the size of the Forest of Fontainebleau, an Eden of pines, tall trees that bend and sway to the tune the roaring Atlantic sends whistling through the treetops. They hunted the wild boar and roasted and ate him as they hunt and eat him now. I, too, *moi qui vous parle*, as the French are supposed to say but do not, once hunted the wild boar—and did not like it.

To a man of peace a wild boar is of less use even than a strawberry to a donkey, for the wild boar is a menace to men who have no wish to kill, and since that wintry afternoon when they gave me a gun and posted me along a lonely road, wild boar have passed completely out of my life.

I was staying in a country house where there were some other Englishmen. The statement that an Englishman remarks on the fineness of the weather and therefore deducts that it is the moment to go out and kill something did not apply at all, because, as it happened, it was as filthy an afternoon as one could find; but shortly before dusk the rain stopped and our host suggested a boar hunt. He had no doubt planned it before, but he suggested it in the same manner that I suggest you order wine to eat with your sandwiches. So I was dragged from the fireside and a book and given a gun. Looking at it with intense dislike, I went out with the others and

was told to stand at a certain spot on the road and to keep a smart lookout, because the beaters were going to drive wild boars toward us to be massacred. Then they left me, very sad and lonely and cold.

It was very damp, beastly and miserable. It began to get dark and there was not a soul in sight. I would have liked to go back to the house, but I did not know my way, and it was getting darker. I knew there would be no wild boar, so soon after the sportsmen left me I placed my gun in the ditch and walked about to try and get warm.

It was almost dark when there was a crashing noise as if some huge beast was hacking its way through a jungle. I looked for a hiding place, and at the same moment through the hedge there tore an animal that was quite evidently exceedingly annoyed. Hot puffs of breath came from its snout. I was unfortunately near enough to see that it had angry little red eyes and most ferocious tusks. In the gloaming the wild boar seemed to my frightened imagination as big as an elephant, but probably I exaggerated slightly. It was big though, and I was frightened. The boar came out in the middle of the road. I saw it stop and hesitate. I remembered what happens to those who hesitate, but thought the proverb might not apply to wild boars, so I stood not upon the order of my going.

Slowly and wearily I crept back. There was no sign of the boar. I picked up my gun and cunningly went away from the spot where the boar had burst through.

I met my companions soon afterwards, walking disgruntledly because they had not seen any sign of a wild boar. I consoled with them, and for ever afterwards held my peace.

V

CASTLES IN FRANCE

TOURISTS bent on seeing France are pushed into sight-seeing motor omnibuses and whisked away to what is called the Garden of France, which seems to be the Loire district and its castles. It is a charming visit, but it is no more the Garden of France than any other part of the country. On the other hand, if you would see France as it is, you must take a leisurely journey through the country of the castles, although you need not bore yourself by visiting many of them: the outsides are sufficient. I trust you, like myself, are more interested in people than in things; castles are fine things in their way, if only some power will "the giftie gie us" of making history live, of being able to people the buildings with humans. However.

Here we are at Angoulême, with the roaring city of Bordeaux well behind us, and the glorious château country in front of us, the winding Loire, the willows, the salmon (food again) and the liquid sunshine they bottle hereabouts. Here is Poitiers. Shut your eyes and hear the tramp of marching men, off to fight the English, the bowmen and the pikemen, leather jerkins and steel helmets. Here are Chinon and Saumur, yonder is the biggest Cavalry School in France. Now let us go to Tours, city of light and learning, city of tourists, city of good wine.

Before the autocars, with their polyglot guides speaking all languages incorrectly, there were the coaches, long, long back, and before them there were travelers on foot

and on horseback; they followed the side roads that now and again we may find. These are the tracks you may notice that start off as roads and disappear into nothing, like the little lines on the palm of your hand, branching off from the life line and the heart line. It is not an inept comparison, for these old roads were both heart and life, if we agree that the heart may be taken as the love line, for it was along these half-blotted-out tracks that men went a-wooing in the olden times, when they rode their horses, or went on foot, fighting and drinking and singing and loving.

A man of quality might be lodged for the night at one of the many castles, not only the castles we see on the green hills, but others which are today mere heaps of crumbling stones. Men of lower degree spent the night at an inn. Just imagine that we could put the clock back a few hundred years, and you and I were wandering as we are now; what should we see?

The river Loire, then as now, would be flowing beneath the green willows, the same sort of birds would be mating, and we in our doublet and hose would be looking for a night's lodging. Here is an inn; shall we enter? There are only two rooms, one for eating and one for sleeping. Men and women eat together in one room and sleep in the second room. It is winter and the windows are closed; it is summer and the windows are not open. But there is one difference between winter and summer. In the winter we sleep without removing any clothing. A modest woman who waited for the lights to be put out before she undressed would be jeered at for her pains. Food in the inns in those days was plentiful and cheap. A chicken cost a few pennies and was eaten with the fingers and the bones thrown to the nondescript dogs wandering about and scratching themselves cheerfully.

In the morning, without washing, we would be on our way. Let us put the clock forward again. It is 1936 and we follow the same roads. The gray Loire flows so softly, the birds flit from willow to willow, and we are looking for a night's lodging. Away from the track of the tourist the inns are humble enough, although the two rooms have grown into perhaps half a dozen; but we still eat all in one room, and there is still the big table in the middle for the guests who are known to the house; for us, concession to the times, are small tables. Chickens have increased in price, but even in these days in some of the inns a meal will not cost very much, and I believe the wine is better than it was. We go to bed, no, not all in one room; but do not always be sure you will find electric light; a candle should not surprise you, and the window will be shut, although, of course, you may open it if you wish. There will be a faucet on the landing outside if you need water. Well, six hundred years have not made such a difference, have they?

In the villages we see life much as it was—just as monotonous, just as simple—except in high summer, when a circus appears over the hill and sets up a tent in a field, and then life for eight hours becomes enchanted. A circus will find a pitch from which it can tap as many villages as possible, and the moment of meeting under the tent is perhaps the only time during the whole twelve months that the villagers see their fellows who live, say, eight miles away. A funeral or a wedding may mean a journey for the few, but there is nothing like a circus to bring people together. Do not expect the exciting “turns” you see in the cities; our friends here are not so hard to please. The proprietor is his own ringmaster; his wife, who has previously cooked the evening meal for the whole troupe, will ride a horse and probably do some other “turn” as

well. The clown, as likely as not, is an old, old man whose age is hidden by chalk. A daughter, or daughters, will be in the show, too, and the animal trainer (a mangy lion, toothless and bored, is most probably the animal) will be the proprietor's son-in-law. But it never fails to attract, does the good old circus.

Saints and sinners, troubadours and soldiers, they have all tramped the roads of Touraine, and there is hardly a mile that has not some memory of a fragment of history which can be brought to life with very little trouble. Visit the castles, if you must, but be sure you do not only listen to the dronings of the guides; try to see for yourself the prisoner thrust into the *oubliettes*, hear his screams die away as they close him in, never again to see the sunshine and the light of day.

When we are in Tours, or in Poitiers for that matter, let us try to imagine ourselves back in the days of Martin, who started life as a Roman soldier but finished as a saint, with two cities fighting for the honor and glory of burying him. Martin was a monk-soldier, one of the men sent to garrison Gaul. In these days we should call him a pacifist; he would, likely as not, be a member of the Secretariat of the League of Nations. Well, one winter's day Martin came riding through the streets when he met a wretched beggar whose body was uncovered but for a few filthy rags. It is said that Martin had already given away all his undergarments, but when he saw the beggar shivering in the snow, Martin ripped his cloak in two and gave half to the beggar man. Bystanders roared with laughter when they saw Martin riding on, half covered with half a cloak.

That night Martin had a vision in which an angel appeared to him, and the angel was wearing the other half of the cloak. Martin took this as a sign that he should

leave the Army and enter the Church, and he tried to do so, but he stayed in the Army for two years, and then when he was summoned to battle he turned conscientious objector and refused to fight. He was accused of being a coward, but Martin offered to go unarmed into battle. It seems that the battle did not take place at all and Martin left the Army.

We next hear of Martin traveling the same Roman road we are traveling, but Martin went further east and crossed St. Bernard's Pass over the Alps, where he was attacked by bandits, but, so history tells us, he converted the chief of the robbers to Christianity.

Martin went to Milan to try to convert his parents, but he succeeded only with his mother. Then when he was preaching in a church he was driven out and beaten with rods. He now returned to Gaul as a missionary, and in Poitiers began to build a monastery. The Roman Empire had now become Christianized. But in France they were still practising human sacrifices. Martin struggled hard to put down these things, and while he was doing so the Bishop of Tours died and the people wanted Martin as his successor. Martin refused, saying he was unworthy. The people played a trick on him. They said there was a poor sick woman who needed his succor, and would he come? When Martin arrived they dragged him to the Cathedral and acclaimed him. What a scene that must have been!

Forget the charabancs outside the Cathedral, and the American bars and the postcard sellers, and think back. A poor, long-haired monk in a coarse robe is dragged protesting into the square here. There are the three bishops waiting for the man of whom they have heard so much, but have never seen. They look at the poor dazed man and think quickly; they decide he shall not be or-

dained, but the crowd will not be denied. It shouts, raves, and screams, and while they mill round the three frightened bishops, Martin is ordained Bishop of Tours.

Martin goes to live in a cell near the Cathedral, then he moves across the Loire, into those chalk pits you can see shining white against the green. Here he founds a colony of eight holy men. They live on fruit, vegetables, and have no money. Among the disciples who came from far was Patrick, who went to Ireland to free the country of snakes and to become its Patron Saint.

Gradually the fame of Martin spread far and wide. He rode a donkey to Treves, the then capital, to seek an audience with the Emperor Maximus, but Martin, although asked to table, refused to eat with the Emperor because he was the murderer of the former Emperor Gratian. Many are the tales of the miracles Martin is said to have made; he stopped dogs chasing a hare which took refuge at his feet; like another holy man, Martin could talk to the birds and make them do his wishes. In the year 400 Martin died on a bed of cinders. He was a tired old man.

Then look what happened; in the name of goodness and holiness, priests fought. The people of Poitiers and the people of Tours both claimed the body for burial. Poitiers had the body, but while the city slept, men from Tours stole in and carried the body away through a window. Martin was buried in Tours and they say two thousand monks walked in procession at the funeral.

The little group of tourists with cameras and guide books are now looking at the tomb of the monk soldier who once rode a donkey along this Roman road beside the Loire, beneath these drooping green willows where the birds he commanded flit and fly. What a funny old world it is, to be sure.

VI

SEASCAPES AND LANDSCAPES

TURNING our backs to the castles, and facing toward the mouth of the Loire, we drift toward Nantes so that once again we may meet the tang of the Atlantic which rises into the crescendo of a rousing roar as it touches the jagged rocks of the Brittany coast.

Far from the sweet-smelling pines and the sand of the Landes, the never still but always heaving green sea splits into tiny bubbles of creamy foam as it thunders against the black granite-like line of the coast. No vessel can live in such a mighty upheaval of this force of Nature, for the sea, even when not angry and stormy, nevertheless carries with it such a threat of destruction that only the bravest of the brave can face such potential catastrophe, and no boat built by man can ride upon the waters, seemingly green with the jealous thought that Man might contest with Nature. Further south there are warm inland coves, smooth, sandy beaches where bathing in the briny ocean is a safe delight. Arcachon is such a place, a beautiful tale of two cities, one for the summer and the other for the winter, a summer pleasure ground for the bather, tiny little beaches, and little boats darting out across the smooth sea from one side of the bay to the other. Oysters for the gourmet, oysters thrust on one as one takes a morning stroll before breakfast. Signs on café windows: *dégustation d'huitres*, a notice or an invitation that oysters may be tasted within. For the hardy, too, trips to the Atlantic in a small steamer that rounds the cape and de-

posits the tripper on the soft sand on the sheltered side. Then a walk of a mere twenty yards, and the wide winds that blow clear across the Atlantic swoop down on the unwary, buffeting them with unseen but hard-felt smacks on the face, sending them staggering like men on the deck of a ship in a storm, sending them running back to the welcome shelter behind the cape.

Arcachon in winter beckons the weak-chested person from more exposed climes and bids him dwell for a few months in the second edition of the town, living in chalets that might be Swiss, living among the health-giving pines and the sunshine that brings health.

But, as I said, that is in the South, far away, although on the selfsame coast. Today we are going to Nantes, that big and beautiful capital of South Brittany, a city which mingles the salt of the sea with the rich cultivation of camellias and magnolias. Cranes rattle, and the boats loaded with fish line up along the quays of dozens of small ports which lie in the neighborhood of Nantes. Merchants sit beneath striped awnings on the café terraces and talk business; they wear round straw hats, neat brown shoes, and dark suits of clothes; they are in Brittany, of Brittany, but what, we wonder, do they know of the strife and struggle which went on before the cranes came and the fishing boats put to sea and the smart shining cafés with the red and white striped awnings were ever thought of? While we watch the Nantais go by, and think of the duck we shall eat for lunch, the famed duck of Nantes, cooked with stoned olives, let us view the Brittany cavalcade.

The ancient capital was Carhaix, and the inhabitants were half Christianized and spoke Latin. The Romans had built fine roads which branched out from Carhaix and over which the chariots rattled. But paganism and

the forest creeping back put an end to the work of the Romans. There were pagan temples in the forests of what we now call Brittany; when the Celts came flying from the Saxons, they came from the only Brittany there was in those days, the country we now label Great Britain.

If you want to study the history of Brittany until the tenth century, read the lives of the Irish saints; you will find it all there. Irish monks cleared the forest and restored the ruined churches. Brittany was the last refuge of Celtism, and it put up a number of heroic fights. The Franks came and took Nantes and Rennes; later came the Normans, and later still the French, and, between times and constantly, the English fought hard against the Celts. Brittany, threatened by the Normans and by the French, for the first time surrendered its independence and ceased to be a Duchy and became a vassal state of France, but through the years and tears Brittany struggled to retain its soul. There were kings and presidents by the dozen, and Brittany was trampled over and beaten and still the people went on keeping a sort of sacred fire burning inside them. The world thinks that Ireland is the home of lost causes; compared to Brittany, Ireland is parvenu. Even today the same spirit survives. Finistère is a world in itself; there is nobody but the Bretons who understand Brittany. A few years ago attention was called to the fact that there was a Separatist movement in Brittany, by the fact that someone tried to blow up a monument in Rennes which commemorates the joining of Brittany to France. Many newspapers published photographs of the bombed monument, and there were a lot of words printed, but there always was a Separatist movement in Brittany, and there always will be.

The Bretons seem, to a casual observer, as cold and hard as their own granite quarries, but who had more fire in

his veins than Chateaubriand, and more imagination than Renan, Bretons both? The Breton is an intelligent fighter of poetic strain, he is indeed the only true mystic of France, and he has been so throughout the ages; nothing can change him. When Joan of Arc went to the stake in Rouen there was one woman who was burnt before the Maid. She was a Breton girl named, I believe, Perrinaic, who had enlisted in the Maid's army and who was taken prisoner at Corbeil and was sent to the stake because she refused to disavow Joan. According to legend, Perrinaic said: "Dame Jeanne (for so they called the Maid) was good and she did well and according to God."

In his own language the Breton divides his land into two: the Sea and the Forest. For administrative purposes the country is divided into Upper and Lower Brittany; in the Upper they speak French, in the Lower, which was the country to which the emigrants came, they speak four dialects, three of which I believe can be understood by Welshmen.

The Bretons are Bretons and nothing else, as we shall find as we wander among these equivalents to the famed men of Harlech. We must never refer to them as Frenchmen, or we shall not be their friends, and we must, if we would be pleasantly treated, show that while we are friendly to the French, we believe—at least so long as we are among the Bretons—that the Breton is the superior person; but in point of fact he does not need our approval. He knows he is.

Brittany produces the naval men of France. The men who fought at Trafalgar had names which ended in "ic," the hall-mark of the true Breton, and if France ever fights at sea again her battleships and cruisers and submarines will be manned by *les gars Bretons*, the boys of Brittany, handsome, lithe, but as tough as steel.

Look at those boats gliding over the emerald sea. The sails of many of them are pale green, while others are blood-red; they give a glow of color to the seascape of Brittany. They ride ghost-like over the oily-looking sea, where there is not even a ripple; they seem as if they were being pulled along by invisible strings. French fishing folk are a curious lot and seem to be utterly different from any others we know. The English and the American sailor have something in common besides language; the one can "get along" with the other. They both belong to the sea. The French fisherman, in the first place, does not look as if he belonged to the sea; he has not that ruddy sea-going face, but he knows his job. As an Anglo-Saxon I am used to knowing that a fisherman puts out to sea in all weathers, except when the winter waves make fishing an impossibility; but of all the French fishermen, only the Bretons face the sea angry as well as calm. A fisherman of the South strolls over and looks at the sea; it is either too rough or else there is not enough wind, or if there is wind, then it is blowing from the wrong direction; it is very difficult for a housewife to obtain her fish, for the fisherman hates the sea; but hereabouts, where we are now, thousands of men wrestle with the sea for their daily bread, and in many a hamlet down by the sea the priest blesses the boats that go forth and bring back their share of the sea harvest.

Vannes, where they speak one of the four dialects (the one which Welshmen cannot understand), Quimperlé, Quimper, all the queerly named towns, big and small, reek of the fish market; but it is a healthy, tarry smell which makes many of us remember queer little towns along the east coast of England, where we spent summer holidays in the long, long ago; where there were bronzed fishermen, recalling to us the Dan'l Peggotty who be-

friended David Copperfield. Men who lived dangerously, who went out to sea when we were tucked into bed beside a night-light and were thinking of the fun we would have tomorrow; men we would remember when the wind came up in the night and rattled the brown sunblind against the window, and we would imagine the little fishing smack dancing on the stormy sea, and there would come to mind David's: "Dead, Mr. Peggotty? . . . Yes, Master Davy, drowned dead."

We sit with peasant and fisherman in pleasant little cafés, near the water-front, or tucked away in little villages through which diligences still run to town; we sip the rather bitter cider from earthenware bowls, and we watch the small-boned old women in the elaborate costume of the country, and the men, young and old, in their special clothes, and see them on a religious festival dance to the music, if music it can be called, of the Brittany bagpipe.

Motoring or walking, we come to innumerable hidden-away villages, ideal places for cheap and restful holidays. There are neither casinos nor cinemas, there is nothing but sea and sunshine and long, lazy days and restful nights, where there is not a sound but the distant rhythmic beating of the surf on the sand, and where dawn is heralded not by the crowing of the cocks, but by the screeching of sea birds.

Elsewhere in this book I have dwelt a little on the art of fishing in France, and my remarks applied chiefly to the non-catching of trout and such other fresh-water fish as may escape the wiles of the man of patience. On the coast of Brittany there is sport of a sort, too, and it will make an appeal to those who when they go after fish like to come home with some tangible result. In the late summer, shoals of mackerel are to be found close to the shore. It is not difficult to make the acquaintance, over

night, of a Breton with a boat. While we sip our cider we can arrange to meet him at daybreak and go hunt after our breakfast.

Very little is necessary in the way of equipment: a little bait, which our Breton friend will provide, several spare lines, also found by our host, and a small oil stove, a frying pan, some butter; bread we fetch from the baker on our way down to the sea, with pepper and salt and a thermos flask of coffee.

The wind is fresh as the sun creeps slowly out of a pearl-gray sky, and we shall be glad of our top-coats until there is a flush of salmon-pink mingling with the gray. With a long roll of bread under our arm, crisp and brown and warm to the touch, we step into the boat with its grinning crew of three. Up go the brown sails and we glide alongside the stone wall to the open sea.

There is a swell this morning, but no white horses; we are hungry, are we not, and somewhere below our breakfast is, well, not exactly waiting, but nevertheless there. The sun rides out of the sky in a blazing golden chariot, and we shed our coats and prepare to work. The lines are baited and overboard they go, as many as we can handle; we are trailing a shoal. Flashes of shining silver and green show for a split second above the emerald sea; we follow. Suddenly there is a bite, and then another, and another. Mackerel are being hauled in as fast as we can pull. Deft fingers remove the fish from the hooks and get them ready for the pan. A blob of golden butter into the frying pan, and in a minute it is sizzling. A fish is popped into the pan and kept moving with a fork. Turn him over and see he is nicely browned, let him stay a couple of minutes longer and dose him with pepper and salt. Then lift him out on to your plate, kind sir, and pour yourself some hot

coffee and cut yourself a chunk (chunk is the word) of bread and tell me if you have ever breakfasted with better appetite.

The fishing boats are moving slowly back, manned by men who are allowed to stay out all night without having to give explanations at home. While the red and brown and blue sails return to the little port, we go on with our breakfast, out of the frying pan, not into the fire, but right on to our plates; so goes the routine of the mackerel, until our hunger, sharpened by the sea air, is satisfied. We make an excellent catch and buy a few fish from our host to take back with us. He is glad enough, because locally the price is very low—the fish has to travel and lose its freshness before it becomes expensive—but as ice is unknown in these little villages, we can only take just enough fish for our almost immediate needs.

We, too, return to the little port and laze on the beach and bathe until lunch time. Before prices began to go up one could live in these small hotels, full board and lodging, for as little as four francs a day—three shillings in English money in those days, or seventy-five cents American—but since we fought to make the world safe for democracy, the cost of democracy has increased quite a good deal in France. Nevertheless, even in these days one can find fairly good hotels, close to a beach, where one can live, all found except wine or cider, for twenty francs a day. Of course there is no jazz band and no casino and no entertainment except what one makes for oneself. There may be a tennis court of sorts, and if you have a car with you golf is possible, but in the ordinary way there is nothing but bathing and deep-sea fishing and walking. In the "amusements" I have mentioned I have not included shrimping, and am not sure whether this should be listed under fishing or hunting, but, to simple

souls like the author's, shrimping combines the pleasures of both named sports.

Shrimping in Brittany is a mixture of athletics, cold reasoning, endurance and surprise. For most sports one dresses oneself, for shrimping in Brittany you undress yourself. Bathing shorts are worn. The equipment consists of a shrimping net purchased in one of the not-too-far towns, and a canvas bag that can be slung from the neck. The feet should be protected with the locally-purchased *espadrilles*, a sole of straw with a canvas cover for the toes; it fastens over the instep with strings. The net should be less cumbersome than that of the professional shrimper, but must be strong.

The coast is rock-bound, not with those puny little rocks you find on the southeast coast of England, but with big man-sized rocks that often need climbing over. They are slippery with seaweed, and the element of surprise will first enter when you suddenly find the sky where the earth was a second before. If you do not wear *espadrilles* you will now wish your companions good hunting and limp home, but if you have provided yourself with feet protectors, we can be on our way. The tyro at the sport just drags or pushes his net through a limpid pool of water and finds his catch consisting of weeny shrimps, a few almost invisible crabs, bits of green seaweed and pebbles. But the spirit of the hunter is with us; not that we disdain a few large-sized shrimps, but we are after what the French call *bouquets*, or what we in English name prawns. Now, believe it or not, the prawn has a brain, and catching a prawn is exercise for yours. You crawl about round a pool and find a nice large rock which seems movable; you lay your net so that it rests at the bottom of the pool, but close at hand. Then you heave at the rock and throw it over. Several semi-transparent

prawns will dart out and make for cover. Then you lift your net and wait for the sand to clear from the disturbed water, and you stand silently poised, just as if you were out shooting rabbits.

With infinite care you slowly push your net toward a prawn; the fish with a wary eye moves backwards, ready to dive, jump or swim forward, according to whichever way he thinks he can escape. Certainly once out of three attempts the brain of the prawn beats your cold reasoning; you feel sure you know what he is going to do, and he proves you wrong. The expression "poor shrimp" may be well deserved, but nobody ever says "poor prawn."

Apart from stalking the prawn, the afternoon is often made fruitful by taking a crayfish, known in French as *langouste*, a near relation of the lobster. In the season of the high tides I have caught flounder with my bare hands among the pools in the rocks, as well as large edible crabs which are correctly known as the poor man's lobster.

Climbing, jumping from crag to crag, stooping, bending, walking, there is plenty of exercise for the body as well as occupation and relaxation for the mind. Let us now think of going home and making use of the prawns and the shrimps. The prawn is easily disposed of—just boil him and eat him cold as an *hors d'œuvre*—but I can make another suggestion *in re* shrimps. Boil him and take off his head and his tail and peel him while he is still hot, than make a shrimp omelette, and you will agree with me that our afternoon was not entirely wasted.

While we are on the subject of fish—and you must understand that on the Brittany coast the sea and its contents are to the Breton what the land and soil of France are to the peasant—let us run over to Douarnenez, that lonely outpost, and see the sardine fishers. There is al-

ways considerable argument concerning this little fish—some say it is a separate species, while others know what the sardine really is, nothing but a baby herring. In Portugal, or rather on the coast of Portugal, there was an important sardine fishing and canning industry, and this industry survived more than twenty Portuguese revolutions, but it is now in reduced circumstances. Off the Cornish coast of England, which in many ways resembles the coast of Brittany, they catch pilchards, and these used to be sold abroad as sardines, but nowadays Brittany is the real home of the sardine industry of Europe, and I was once in the middle of a minor revolution which was all caused by sardines.

The first Communist mayor in France was a mayor of Douarnenez. There was considerable Communist propaganda in the little Breton town, and there was a strike. The whole population of the town lives on the sardine—this is no exaggeration. The men go out and fish and bring home the catches and the women stay home and work in the factories, canning the sardines. Now, we know that drought can ruin farmers, but do you know that a few sharks can ruin a city? It is a fact. If sardines—the shoals of baby herrings—are frightened away, there is no work for the men and no work for the women, and starvation for everybody. Little do we think as we toy with a sardine what heartbreaks and struggles are concerned with this headless morsel of fish, a mere mouthful while waiting for the more serious *pièce de résistance*, which I always think is an indelicate way of referring to the possible toughness of the meat.

Sardines are vintaged like wine. The cheap brands of sardines correspond to the cheap wines of no known *cuvée*. Expensive sardines have been vintaged for about seven years, packed in the very best olive oil. The fishing boats

of Douarnenez put to sea with vats of oil and the sardines are boiled in them and taken back to the factories to be packed. But atmospheric disturbances far away brought sharks to the coast of Brittany and there were no sardines; there was a deep distress, hunger and want. The sardines returned, but there was always the fear that they would vanish again. Meanwhile the cost of living had gone up, but the meager salaries in the factories had not gone up; the fishermen were getting barely enough to eke out an existence, and most certainly nothing to put away for a sardineless day. Yet the merchants were increasing the prices of sardines to the retailer. Your sardines were costing you more, but this was not helping the man who caught them or the woman who neatly packed them into tins. So came Communism to Brittany and later to France, all because of the sardines.

I was Paris correspondent of a newspaper in those days and had private information concerning the seriousness of the situation, but this forlorn coast of Brittany is so far away that hardly any news from it ever reaches Paris; there were only a few lines in the papers stating that there was a strike in the sardine industry at Douarnenez. I went. I found red flags flying from some of the farm-houses; the fishermen, under the guidance of the mayor, were trying to induce the farmers to seize the land, just as the fishermen and the women wanted to seize the boats and the factories.

For a few moments let us now look at Douarnenez. It is just a little town stuck at the end of a rocky promontory. The boats you see coming in now were the same boats I saw all laid up in the harbor, and the men you now see coming off were sulky and suspicious of inquisitive foreigners—not of an Englishman, of a foreigner; they did not know whether I was French or not, I was

just a foreigner. Those strapping young women you see, or rather their mothers mostly, as I am talking of fourteen years ago, were just as attractive in their kilted skirts and their curious head-dresses, but they were not working as they are today; they were listening to strike speeches in their own Breton dialect. I could not understand, but their gestures showed anger. Then I made a bad mistake of tactics. I was walking about the town and saw that the men were no longer standing idly watching the motionless ships, and there were no women in the streets. I noticed that the market place was packed with men and women. I went there. There was the mayor addressing a packed audience. I stood on the outskirts of the crowd, the only person among hundreds who was obviously not connected with the sardine industry. Then I saw the speaker looking at me, and he said something that I could not understand, and then I saw the people turn toward me, and those nearest me began to mutter. Now I had to make up my mind pretty quickly. It was fairly obvious they thought I was a spy, and the harbor was not far away; it is a deep harbor. Should I stay or should I run? Which would you have done? So did I.

Now let us leave this dreary but dramatic spot, and make for St. Malo and see the late summer visitors. St. Malo and its huge stone ramparts, the port of departure for the Channel Islands, the port whence go once a year those curious men, the Breton onion sellers. Like the Chinamen one sees all over the world, standing at street corners and selling paper flowers, the Breton onion sellers are controlled by a central agency. They are given their fares to Southampton and a supply of onions which they carry strung to a long pole. They are told how much they have to turn in to their owner for the onions, and the rest of the money they may keep. They have to sup-

port themselves. You may have seen them at your side door trying to sell onions in broken English. They are brown-faced men, with flashing white teeth, sturdy and hard-looking. Sometimes I have tried to talk to them in the little French they know. They sleep just anywhere, under a hayrick or a hedge; they do not care. They buy a little bread and eat a raw onion with it and drink what the French satirically call *Château La Pompe*, water. They are not unhappy.

We can drive over and see the immense oyster beds at Cancale, a little Brittany town that supplies millions of oysters, and we must drive between the great salt marshes to St. Michel, one of the wonders of France and the world. An enormous mass of granite is topped by a gem of architecture. It resembles nothing so much as a giant's castle in a fairy story; it dominates an amazing bay, which is the boundary of Brittany and Normandy. The ruined abbey—the giant's castle—has a gilded statue of Saint Michel. When the rays of the setting sun glint on the golden statue of the saint the effect is superb. Then, while you look, there is a moment of drama. The sun drops down behind the hill, and the glowing mass of a moment ago is turned to sullen black.

It takes not more than half an hour to walk round the mountain, but it is a dangerous proceeding; not only are there quicksands to avoid, but the tide comes in so fast, with the speed of a galloping horse, that much care has to be taken to avoid being cut off by the rising tide. Rescues and near escapes are common, and fatal accidents are not unknown. Many people go and spend the night on the Mount—there are several hotels. The rising tide is a marvelous sight. One moment the wide bay is just a big expanse of sand, and the next it is filled deep with gray-looking sea water. The tide rushes across and fills the

mouths of the small rivers which empty themselves into the bay. The ebbing tide is just as strange; one moment there is water, and only a few seconds later nothing but sand.

There is a legend that the archangel Michel appeared on this granite mount, and thereafter it became a favorite pilgrimage. In the seventeenth century the abbey was used as a detention house for unruly priests, and then it became a State prison, and was then closed until after the Revolution, when for some years it was again a prison. Although many modern pilgrims go to Mont St. Michel, few go with religious intent; most go to send picture postcards to their friends, to see the rising and ebbing tide, and, if their purses allow it, to eat in the famous restaurant of *la mère Poulard*, which has been there for so many years. The fame of the lady who originally opened the restaurant is legendary and nationwide in France. The specialty of the house is the omelette, made, while you watch, on a huge fire in an open fireplace, a great rarity in France. Every day, year in year out, they serve the same lunch: *hors d'œuvres*, omelette, chicken. It is a wonderful effort.

Before we leave Brittany for Normandy I would like you to come with me to a little fishing village which has a name but no railway station, telephone or post office, yet is known to all the world, for it was this village Pierre Loti had in mind when he wrote his masterpiece, *Iceland Fishermen*.

The water is so clean and clear that you can look down many feet and see how baby crabs behave at home. It looks so peaceful that you can understand how the returning men must feel when their boats sight the lighthouse on Ile Brehat over there, and they know they will soon be leaving the Atlantic roaring behind them. The small

stone cottages are still clustered with late roses, but soon the summer will pass and there will come the dreary winter days and nights when the wind never ceases howling, and the waves of the Atlantic will be mountain high, even in the narrow channel between the mainland and the island, and the women will peer out into the night and think of their menfolk far away in the bitter cold of the Iceland nights, and they will wonder if they will come back, for many never return from their perilous quest.

In almost every village there is a church, and in this little hamlet there is also a church which would not differ a whit from any other church in any other small French village, were it not for its wall. It is an old wall, crumbling to pieces, as a matter of fact, and the green ivy is thick over it. The wall is about twelve feet high and is covered with stone or marble slabs, and on each slab is a name, and on some slabs there are several names, and you see the same name but with different Christian names on many other slabs, for this is the Wall of the Disappeared, and the names are of the men who sailed away and never came back.

It is the story of a war that never ends, a record of a yearly struggle with unrelenting Nature. Now and again a woman will come from the church and kneel and pray in front of a slab, and when she rises you will notice her eyes are full of unshed tears, and when she has gone you may stroll by and you will notice that the slab is old but another name has been freshly added.

The name of the village is L'Arcouest, and there is no railway station, post office or telephone, but the names of the missing villagers live for evermore in the hearts of the women of this corner of Brittany, who, when the roses fade, see their men sail away, and when the daffodils are blooming await their return.

VII

THE CIDER COUNTRY

WE will go southwards again, and can increase our speed now that there is a snap in the air and the nights are getting chilly. Let us go first to Rennes, the former capital of Brittany. Rennes is what they call in England the county town of the Ille-et-Vilaine; it is the see of an archbishop, the headquarters of the 10th Army Corps. Some time before we reach the city we shall become aware of its military importance. We drive across great, gorse-covered heaths. Often enough we shall find iron chains strung across the roads barring our route, and shall perforce have to go a long way out of our way to reach Rennes. For this great heath is the chief artillery practising ground of the country. Huge shells, live ones, go hurtling through the air and burst with deafening reports, throwing up great masses of brown earth and dragging down trees. Secret guns of vital importance to national defense are tried out here.

Rennes is built where the rivers Ille and Vilaine meet, and it is the latter river which is spanned by six bridges and divides Rennes into two parts. The city is relatively modern, as it was rebuilt in 1720, after a great fire which raged for seven days and nights and which wiped out the entire city, with the exception of a few narrow tortuous streets near the cathedral. Rennes, you will notice, has a severe atmosphere, rather like the disapproving look of a spinster aunt, but this well becomes a former parlia-

mentary city, and the big squares and rigid-looking streets remind of Versailles.

By way of Vitré we will go across country to Laval, and so to Le Mans. You will notice how empty-looking the country is. Villages are few and far between, as they say, and although the country is cultivated, it looks as if it were cared for by gnomes or fairies, who are able to efface themselves at will. One wonders how and when the fields are planted with the rich grain, the barley that grows in great green waves. Where are the people? In the villages there are just a few old men and women hobbling along, but of the workers on the land, not a sign. Mystery.

Le Mans is the center of the horse-breeding industry, whence come the great and sturdy Normandy dray horses, a breed that is world famous. Brewers' horses they are, and you see them in the grounds of the stud farms, brown and sleek, with strong-looking legs and wavy manes. They cost much money, and buyers come from all over Europe and from England and even America to bid for them.

This is the cider country, and unfortunately, we are too late to see the white-flowering apple trees which border all the roads of Normandy. Cider is king, and there are hundreds of thousands of apple trees and millions and millions of apples that go into the cider casks; but curiously enough it is impossible in France to obtain a good eating-apple. Of late years they have begun to import apples from California, but you may roam the whole of France, including every yard of the cider country, and nary an eating-apple will you find.

In early spring, when the blossoms are on the trees, and better still in my opinion, just a little later, when the blossoms fall, lying like a thin, white mantle of snow on

both sides of the roads, then the cider country is at its best. Normandy is a great romantic land. Its history, as we shall see, goes on living, not only on the French side of the Channel, but also in England, where the influence of the Norman Conquest still exists today; it is permanent enough in the shape of the windows of the churches across the narrow expanse of water, but it can be seen in the fair hair and blue eyes of thousands of the people.

In English we say "as stubborn as a mule"; in French they remark "as obstinate as a Norman." How the Norman obtained such a reputation I do not know; he gives the impression of hardness more than stubbornness or obstinacy; he drives a hard bargain, he is the typical horse trader of France, and is a blood brother to the horse dealer the world over; shrewd, rather cunning, but dependable, a somewhat unusual French characteristic.

In Spanish they have a flattering expression: "word of an Englishman," which is used largely when two Spaniards are concluding a deal; yet, through the years, one must wonder whether the traveling Englishman of the late seventeenth and eighteenth century really had such a wonderful reputation for keeping his word. Certainly a goodly number of French and South German innkeepers were roundly swindled by the coaching milords of the time—re-read *Vanity Fair* and you will find what Thackeray had to say about this—and they lived to regret the many little attentions and good bottles of wine they had showered on the foreign traveler; but in a competition for sticking to the letter of a bargain, I am of the opinion that he whom we call a Frenchman, ignoring from what part of the country he comes, would not figure at the top of the list.

If promises are as frail as pie-crust, then all I can say is French pastry must be as flimsy as the stuff dreams are

made of. In order not to carry out a contract a French person will, quite genuinely no doubt, bring any domestic event into the foreground. He will write and say he regrets, and when a Frenchman begins to regret you may as well pack up and return home. It is all over. It may be a grandmother's cold that he regrets, or an attack of measles which has beset little Aristide, but if you happen on the word regret in the first three lines of the letter, give it up.

The Norman, so I find, is not of the regretful kind; he will stick to his bargain, but you may be pretty sure that he is not going to lose by it; he never sells and regrets.

If the Bretons are the mystics of France, the Normans are the practical people; yet they have in them, these big, blond giants, a poetical strain. Their stories of their animals, fanciful stories, somewhat resemble those of the Irish, just as the Bretons themselves are of close similitude to the Irish. The Normans call their sheep Robert, or Robin, Mouton; he is, in the animal kingdom, the opposite number of the meek humans—who certainly have not, so far, gone very far toward a promised inheritance of the earth. Robin Mouton is the preyed-upon, always resigned to his fate, has the very wool taken off his back, as they say of a person resigned to be "put upon." Little children are told to ask the sheep: "Where are you going?" and the sheep answers: "To the butchers." "When are you coming back, sheep?" "*Jamais, jamais.*" The long-drawn-out suffix is supposed to be the baa-a of Robin Mouton.

Pigs are the misers of the Normandy countryside; they save up, but their heirs, the farmers, get rich, and on the feast of St. Anthony the farmers say prayers for the pig's welfare. The goat is Biquette, and the sheep Robin

Mouton, but the pig has no pet name; yet with solemn irony the peasant speaks of him as Monsieur, or "the noble," and by what term of origin I do not know, "the bird of St. Anthony."

The cock has, since the Revolution, been the national symbol of France. This is due merely to a Latin pun. In the time of the Romans *gallus* meant both a cock and a man of Gaul. The cock is the herald of the dawn and life, but the legend is a Normandy legend, although it has grown, and almost everywhere in France little children are told that when the cock crows at dawn the bad fairies fade away, ghosts vanish and spells are broken. Long before Rostand wrote *Chanteclair* the French peasant decided that the day for him began at cock-crow; but the Normandy legend is about a little boy who traveled with a cock under his arm and came to a country where the birds were unknown, and the inhabitants of this country were obliged to go and look for daybreak with a plough. When they heard the cock crow and immediately daybreak lit up the eastern sky, they gave the little boy much money to purchase from him the magic bird.

Frenchmen, other than the Normans, affirm that the Normans are the most possessive people in France; yet we find that in the Middle Ages, Normandy was nicknamed "the Country of Wisdom." It is an established fact that the soil of Normandy is particularly fine, and there is always plenty of rain; therefore things grow easily, which perhaps makes other regions jealous; but the wisdom may have come from the ability to keep what they had—and to drive a hard bargain. In many parts of France, land was allotted by what is known as the "*holée*" system, which meant that a man's land was bounded by the limit of distance to which his shouted voice would

carry. It is worthy of note that this system never prevailed in Normandy.

Although Normandy is mostly agricultural—Maupas-sant said that the earth seemed to sweat cider and meat—there are nevertheless some pretty big industrial concerns in Normandy; Elbeuf and Rouen had their spinning trades of old; Caen, for one instance, is the center of the newly developed iron industry. But the Norman is essentially a man of the land, he does not belong to the factory any more than the Breton. One may occasionally hear in France the expression "*le trou Normand*," the Normandy Hole; it is a drinking expression in origin, and the hole is meant to be filled with a little glass of Calvados, which is apple brandy, or apple jack, whichever you prefer. A real good Calvados is a joy; it flows, not as, say, a Benedictine or Chartreuse, in a sirupy slow procession through the body; a Calvados comes along shouting: "Here I am, make way for me," and it begins to light up the lamps inside until we feel all aglow. It bears a family resemblance to Armagnac, but is perhaps less strong, although more mellow.

Calvados, somehow, fits in with the Norman character; it is essentially a drink of the North, strong like the cider. Except on festive occasions, very little wine is drunk; it is always cider and beer, as no wine is produced in Normandy. But when he is festive, the Norman is certainly festive, and never more so than on the occasion of a wedding. A Normandy wedding breakfast or lunch is not so much a meal as a combination of several meals; it starts early and it goes on late. The meal begins directly after the ceremony and just keeps on going on. Beef, mutton, veal, pork, eggs, fish, vegetables, they all appear and are eaten, but there is no hurry. When the guests give the appearance of having eaten heartily, it is customary to

serve a little cheese and a glass of Calvados—for the Normandy Hole. They toy with a morsel of *Pont l'Évêque*, a local cheese, and sip the Calvados and talk; cheese is an excellent digestive, and the cheese of the Bishop's Bridge is always good when it is in condition, and when it comes to the table of a Normandy wedding it is in condition.

When night falls, the wedding feast is still under way, and much cider has washed down the heavy meats; but there is always a corner, the Normandy Hole, and the guests eat just a little more food and adventure on a few chickens, cooked perhaps in another local fashion, known as the manner of the Valley of the Auge, when the fowls are boiled and served with a very rich and heavy cream sauce. With little glasses of apple brandy and cheese, the guests fight off an attack of indigestion, and although some may fall asleep at table they soon wake and drink a little more and eat a little more, until finally, when the wedding breakfast has reached almost the supper stage, the songs are sung and the tables are cleared and the fiddler strikes up a tune and there is a dance—the old country dances—and when the party is breaking up, a romping, boorish game of trying to steal the bride's garter.

The coast of Normandy is cold in the winter, and unless the summer is particularly hot, the beaches of Normandy are so cool as to be almost cold. Nevertheless, until there was a summer vogue for the Riviera, which has not long existed, the *plages* of Normandy were the most fashionable as well as the most popular for Parisians. To own a villa at Houlgate was glamorous, and even to rent one for the summer months was to place one on a pinnacle of near fame. But of all the Normandy resorts Trouville was the most popular, with Dieppe a good second. The origin of the word Trouville is amusing. A Frenchman searching for a place to spend his summer

vacation looks for what he calls *un petit trou pas cher*, an inexpensive little hole. Here then we have Trouville, "Holetown." That, of course, is merely satirical, because Trouville, with its handsome hotels, its villas and its casinos, is anything but a hole; and once upon a time it was both fashionable and popular, an extremely difficult combination, but it could be managed.

The middle-class Frenchman takes his holidays in a way entirely different from other nationals; or perhaps I should put some of my remarks in the past, as the coming of the motor car changed many things in France, as elsewhere; but the fundamentals remain now.

School holidays in France control the holiday question. Schools "break up" in the middle of July and do not re-assemble until October 1. Thus there is a very small exodus to the sea until the middle of July, and the resorts' seasons last until late September. The French *pater familias* rents a small villa, and lives at the sea very much as he does at home. If he is a small shopkeeper, with himself and say one assistant, and with Madame taking the money, he just closes the shop for two and a half months; the assistant has to live as best he can; he may possibly obtain one week's pay or two weeks' if he has been a long time in his job. If the father of the family cannot manage to stay away for the whole summer, he arrives on Friday night in what they call at the seaside the "husbands' train," and he returns Sunday night; but thousands of French husbands do manage to stay away all summer long. Their holiday is one long laze; no golf or excursions in charabancs, no tennis, considerable paddling, but mostly eating and sleeping and wearing neither collar nor tie. Complete relaxation.

The French father of the family may go to the races—they have racing in the summer at the best-known resorts

—and gamble a few francs, but he does not often frequent the casino at night, or if he does he will go to the cinema or theater, and during the intermission he will, with his wife, stroll through the room where they play *la boule* and drop a few francs on the green baize; but he is no gambler. The *chemin de fer* and the baccarat, like the golf links and *les tennis*, are not for him, but for the livelier crowd which flits here and there and stays in the hotels with the big terraces where bare-backed ladies and men in *smokings* (anglice: dinner-jackets or tuxedos) dine in the open air. Jacques Bonhomme *et Madame* stroll past after their more homely dinner, soup and cold ham from the *charcuterie* and salad and cheese, and much bread and a bottle of wine, with their trailing offspring, and do not envy anybody anything.

It was the livelier crowd which caused the late Duc de Morny to found Deauville, which is the younger but more pretentious sister of Trouville. A little estuary separates the two resorts, and *les snobs*, as the French call them, sleep in the more plebeian Trouville, but send their friends picture postcards from Deauville. The man who put the "dough" in Deauville and, I trust, eventually took some out, was the late Monsieur Cornuché who "ran" Cannes and some of the more expensive restaurants of Paris. During the hectic post-war years, when French and English and Germans and Americans were trying to escape from themselves, Deauville had a great success with the world's more worldly crowd; gambling, love-making, tennis and golf, as well as racing, were all to be found in the tiny little town which consists of nothing very much but a boardwalk and a racecourse and some golf links and a few expensive hotels. With the coming of world Depression there was a Slump with a very big S in Deauville, and the brilliance of the short summer sea-

son is no more. But Deauville achieved something more important. It was in itself a post-war epoch, a subsection of a crazy world.

Just beyond Trouville, on the road to Caen, we find another resort, Cabourg, with a beach nearly five miles long, typical of the pre-war Normandy resort for the Frenchman who did not have to look for the little hole not dear. The Cabourg season began in the middle of August and for days there would be racing and flying meets. Yes, once upon a time, France was crazy about flying meets, and there would be regattas and fireworks and all sorts of things. Cabourg and the rest still carry on the illusion, but the day of the gay Normandy seaside resort has passed, the *plages* with the striped red and white parasols, the little tables, the nautical glasses to watch the bathing beauties dipping their pink toes in the gray ocean, the cups of chopped hay and tepid water called tea, the glasses of port *before* dinner, long before the cocktail had crossed the Atlantic. The touring company playing *La Dame aux Camelias* at night; no *boule*, but "little horses." A calm, dull perhaps, but easygoing life. Going, going, GONE!

Normandy is such a peaceful-looking country, there is nothing wild or romantic about it, but it breathes content, and, with the attraction that never seems to be lacking when we are traveling in France, every now and again we come across something that strikes a chord of memory. You remember Planquette's delightful comic opera *Les Cloches de Corneville*? We are on our way to Honfleur, we turn a corner and we are in the village of Corneville, and the story of the opera comes to life. We can readily see the old miser, Gaspard, jingling his coins in that old house, and the jingle of the gold joins the jingle of the tunes.

But if Corneville reminds us of comic opera, Honfleur recalls something more dramatic: the Conquest of England. Through these very streets must have tramped the armed men of William, his sly, red-headed son Rufus dreaming already perhaps of the day when he would defy his father. The ships lie at anchor, and tramp, tramp, tramp, come the bowmen, ready to sail over those gray waters to the unknown.

The main fleet is stationed in the bay of Hastings—I flew over the pier in an aeroplane the other morning—but those who had commanded these ships had landed too far to the north, at a little village called Rumeney, now known as Romney, close to Folkestone. The inhabitants attacked the invaders and beat them, and William heard the news and stormed and raved and sent to this town of Honfleur, asleep now except for a short summer season of cheap trippers and an occasional English yacht, and the streets echoed ever louder to the tramp of bowmen and pikemen.

William, instead of marching on London, as he had intended, fell back on Hastings. He marched along the shore, burning and pillaging to avenge defeat. He attacked Dover, but the castle withheld, until for reasons unknown the garrison surrendered. And then came the Battle of Hastings, and William the Bastard became William the Conqueror, William the First of England.

VIII

THE BEAUVAISIS

THE turn of every year reminds me of the apology of King Charles II: he was so sorry he was such a long time dying, but parting, they say, is such a sweet sorrow, and, don't you agree, the melancholy we may feel when the year is wearing itself out is tinged with the mellowness of middle age? Autumn is very much like ripe manhood, or womanhood, too, for that matter. The French, our hosts, are true philosophers; they love love, and they love life, and they know how to make the best of it, the best of each. The springtime passes so rapidly; like youth, it is here and gone almost before we realize we should be enjoying it. When summer comes, we are not ready for it, we are pushed into it, willy-nilly. We begin to like it, take pleasure in it, this high summer of every year, and the one, the only one, of our lives. But with the experiences of spring and summer behind us, we are ready when autumn, that ripe moment of middle age, the sere and yellow, begins to dawn. It does not, or at least it should not, catch us napping. Beyond it we know winter lurks, and we must prepare for the last days of the year and our lives. Autumn, that long, mellow moment, is the antechamber to winter. We should dwell in it, savor its flavor as long as we can, appreciate the peace of its days and the calmness of its long evenings and nights, for after autumn there is the long, long sleep.

Incidentally, and talking of mellowness, autumn in France is the time, *par excellence*, for good eating and

drinking. My Muse warns me there is too much about wine in this book. I join issue; there can never be too much about good wine, and I protest that the wine about which I write *is* good. Springtime on a menu is not too bad; the *agneau pré salé*, the lamb of the salted prairie, is excellent, and do you know why mutton is universally good in England, why Southdown mutton is particularly good, and why the best French mutton comes from north Brittany? Because, to answer the first part of my own question, England is so small that practically all her pastures carry the salt of the sea, because the Downs of Sussex are particularly salt flavored, and, finally, because the salt marshes of north Brittany provide such excellent grazing ground for sheep.

Springtime means the early salad, the crisp lettuce, the free-for-all *dent de lion*, which we corrupt to dandelion, the lion's tooth. Potatoes, the little new potatoes of England and America, are not so good, the peas are also less good than we know, but give me news please, as the French say, of the little new carrots, the creamy young turnips; but I will allow you that the asparagus is not so good. The scarlet-runner bean of England is unknown, but the French have a delicate *haricot vert* which transcends the runner bean. The stupid old legend that "one cannot obtain good beef in France" still exists, despite all evidence to the contrary, but the steaks and chops are less good than in the Anglo-Saxon countries; yet is there anything tastier—I hate the word, but it serves—than a tiny French lamb cutlet, brown and succulent?

When summer is with us, wherever we may be, and when summer means heat, we think gratefully of cold meat and salad, so, my friends, summer on a menu is not interesting.

But autumn! Shall we choose a dinner? An autumn

dinner, when a wood fire at dusk gives us the right note of mellowness. When the candles are lit and their pale light is reflected back by the shining, bare mahogany; the glint of the silver, the glistening of the polished glass. A dozen oysters, not Blue Points, not Whitstables or Natives, perhaps not even the little Marennes, but try a dozen *Portugaises Claires*, the small deep-shell so-called Portuguese oysters, which many an epicure disdains and refuses to grace by the name of oyster; so be it, but try, please, just a dozen, and use neither a squeeze of lemon nor a drop of tabasco; use a spoonful or two of *sauce échalotte*, an onion of the species chopped fine and mixed with wine vinegar and allowed to stand until the onion is well soaked. If you are a true *gourmet*, and what the French call *un amateur* of oysters, pardon, *Portugaises*, you will prize away the bivalve from his shell, put a spoonful of sauce over him, then you will raise the shell to your mouth and drink the sauce. Fact, Madame.

To follow we will have, I think, a Potage St. Germain, a fairly thick pea soup in which have been cooked a few pieces of smoked sausage; in the soup we sprinkle some cubes of well-toasted bread. Then a little venison, not too high, but as they eat it in France, and with it a *purée* of chestnuts, well stirred and mixed with a large spoonful of cream.

Then a partridge, also not well hung, but well cooked, a noble bird lying on what the French so delightfully call a sofa, a layer of toast on which is a generous layer of *pâté de foie gras*. A mixed salad, I think, a salad of beetroot *mâché*, and a slice or two of tomato, and do not be stingy with the olive oil.

Nothing more, I thank you, but a morsel of ripe Roquefort cheese. We will drink a *champagne nature* with our oysters and soup, and a bottle of Mercury with

our venison and partridge, and we shall be glad of perhaps an extra half-bottle to finish with our cheese; it will bring out the flavor.

Bad times in France have put an end to nearly all the stag hunts, and many will join with me in gladness thereof, but there is still one which flourishes, the Hunt of the Duc de Gramont, whose stately château stands on the right-hand side of the road between Chantilly and Paris. It is not the carted stag, but the so-called wild stag which is hunted in the forests of the Beauvaisis. The wild stag, that gentle soft-eyed creature, which runs with the swiftness of the hare from noise, but when approached with timidity equal to his, he will sidle up and nibble from your hand.

On the Feast of Saint Hubert, the patron saint of the hunters, the hounds of the Hunt are taken to church and are blessed. Then they go after the stag and leap at his throat and tear him to pieces. Twice a week in the autumn months the Gramont Hunt meets. The horsemen and women nowadays are few, but numerous local inhabitants turn up in motor cars and on foot. There are plenty of stags around about the countryside through which we are now passing, and one will be found in a very short time. With a great shout the Hunt starts in pursuit of the frightened animal, his fragile-looking legs drumming on the metaled road which traverses the forest, or lightly touching the thick layers of dead leaves between the trees. Engines are rapidly put into action as the motorists try to follow the darting stag along the roads; pedestrians run hard on the tracks of the bellowing hounds, and the horsemen in pink, canter, heads well down to escape the low-hanging boughs of russet-tinted trees. This way and that the stag dashes, returns on his path, a brown silhouette against a background of dark green and brown.

Shouts echo through the forest, which echoes back the baying of the long-eared dogs.

When hard-pressed a stag takes to water. There is no lack of it. There is the River Oise, and the Oise Canal, and the three big lakes, linked one to another, which lie buried deep in the forest near Coye. The panic-stricken stag zigzags through the forest to be sighted time and time again as he races through a peaceful glade. Instinct perhaps, or knowledge of the locality, leads him to fancied sanctuary near the Chapel of the White Lady, which faces the end of the first of the chain of lakes at Coye. Closely followed by the dogs, the stag plunges into the lake; he outswims his pursuers and begins to move in circles.

The Hunt reaches the border of the lake, and the whipper-in tries to call off the dogs; some stand on the edge of the water and shake themselves and bark, while the remainder refuse to be called off, but make frantic efforts to reach their exhausted prey.

Then two members of the Hunt climb into a flat-bottomed boat; it is green with weeds and leaks badly; they unlock a rusty padlock and seize hold of broken oars and push out from the bed of weeds. They make painful progress towards a circle of ripples which form the outer circle of the floundering stag. The dogs are still barking and the crowd on the bank is shouting suggestions.

After about ten minutes the boat is near the stag, and the stag appears about to sink. His power to defend himself has all gone. One of the huntsmen leans over and seizes the stag by his horns and the other huntsman takes a knife and tries to cut the stag's throat, but its body is slippery with wet and the huntsman cannot obtain a grip, but he continues to make futile slashes at the stag.

This goes on for a long time, one man maneuvering

the boat and his companion slashing at the stag; the animal is being hacked to death. It is the cruelty of the bull ring, but without any of the glamor. The stag is near enough to the shore to be seen very plainly. He is bleeding profusely and his soft eyes reflect pain, but the sport continues until the water is blood-red, and the stag dies, and the hunt is over until the following Saturday.

Sometimes the stag has not the time or the opportunity to reach water, and he is attacked by the dogs and dies in the forest which is his home, and where he harms no man, neither raiding chicken coops, like the fox, nor damaging crops, which is the excuse for stag hunting on Dartmoor. Sometimes the stag dies as heroically as he can, fighting for his life on the public road.

Out of the forest, and on the way to the Duc de Gramont's château, is a big white stone building which many misguided people mistake for a château, but it is merely a relic of the days of paper money, when wise men tried to convert francs into bricks and mortar; you will find many such follies in the Beauvaisis. This white building, blinding even in the autumn sunshine, is a half-empty block of flats. It stands at the bottom of a hill. Down this hill one peaceful October afternoon came a stag at bay, hard pressed by the hounds. The stag, when opposite the building, and in full view of dozens of people attracted to their windows and balconies by the barking of the dogs and the encouraging cries of the huntsmen, neatly leaped up a grass bank and was brought up sharply by an iron railing over which he had tried to jump, but fell back owing to the angle of the grass bank. The hounds were on him like a pack of wolves. The weary stag turned round and lowered his head and tried to keep the dogs at a distance with his horns, and possibly he inflicted some damage, but his doom was nigh.

The whole pack of hounds leaped and jumped, while the stag twisted his beautiful head this way and that, and in the road a few feet away the members of the Hunt assembled and passing errand boys checked their bicycles, and passing motorists stopped their cars to watch this one-sided battle, and the people stood at their windows and on their balconies.

It did not take very long for the dogs to bring the stag to earth, to begin to tear at his soft throat, and to worry and kill him by inches, while the crowd looked on, and a little English girl on a balcony opposite sobbed her heart out.

Gisors stands between Normandy and the Beauvaisis. It is a great place for fishermen, who, when the May fly rises, flock beneath the willows and sit in the lush grass and fish and drink cider and eat big meals and sleep and fish. A good time is had by all, with the possible exception of the trout.

The fishing is in the river Epte, which runs through a most beautiful valley, considerably off the beaten road of tourists. On the west of the valley is Normandy, and the peasants will tell you that the other side is French, showing once again that so far as the Parisians are concerned—for we are within about thirty miles of Paris—Normandy is just as “foreign” as Brittany. Normandy rather boasted of being prosperous until it became “French,” and the Normans still recall the times when their power was great, when they raided England, and took their civilization with them far to the south of Gaul.

Even on this “French” side of Normandy you will come across numerous stud farms upkeeping the age-old fame of the Normandy dray horses. One stud farm near Gisors forms part of a ruined feudal castle said to have been built by Henry II of England. Gisors, although seldom

visited except by fishermen, has been important through the ages. Three rivers meet here, the Epte, the Troesne and the Reveillon, and it is on the highway from Paris to the Channel. Perhaps the coincidence of the three rivers originally gave rise to the naming of a famous hostelry, the Three Fishes; one from each river. There are many ruined castles, one which used to be the property of Philippe Auguste, and the town hall was formerly a Carmelite monastery.

This countryside, so close to Paris—and yet, if we had no idea of distance, it would seem so far away—teems with interest and beauty. Frenchmen, or Parisians, if you like, travel hundreds of miles south and southeast or southwest, and totally ignore the charm and interest of what lies practically outside their doors.

Senlis, for example, is one of the oldest towns in France, for its origin goes back to the time of the Druids; and within its walls from time to time there have been most of the kings of France, from Clovis to Henri IV, who stayed there; others passed through with jesters, mistresses and troubadours on their way to Picardy or Flanders. War has ever been close to Senlis during just one hundred years. Fighting started in 1814; in 1870 the first echoes near Paris of the coming of the hated Prussians sounded in Senlis, and in 1914 the rolling, gray tide of the German invasion reached the ancient city. The Germans entered Senlis and were there when the Battle of the Marne caused a hasty retreat. In revenge they burned the little city. A new and pretty railway station, built to replace the former one, prominently displays a tablet on the façade stating why it was necessary to build a new station.

Numerous little restaurants are to be found in Senlis, close to the ruins of the Roman arena, but I will say no

more on the subject of food. Rather would I call your attention to a touch of the Orient we notice in the streets and shady avenues of the town. Morocco cavalymen in light khaki and thick *burnous*. Ever since a Communist movement began, and the industrial suburb of St. Denis "went red," there has been a Division of Moroccan cavalry at Senlis, on the direct road to St. Denis.

A few minutes from Senlis is Mortefontaine, where the former castle of Jean Bonaparte has been turned into the club house of a smart society golf club. *Sic transit gloria* . . . bogey.

Ermenonville, also very much off any main road, has a huge tract of veritable sandy desert, which has served as the background for several exciting films. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was buried near here, and there is also a castle with an intriguing park. The whole countryside is thickly studded, you will perceive, with huge rocks of probable volcanic origin. In the park of the Château d'Ermenonville is the Rock of Former Loves, the Temple of Philosophy, and the Tomb of the Young Unknown One. I said the park was intriguing; we will leave it at that.

Shall we run over to Compiègne and see what everybody wants to glimpse: the railway coach in which the Armistice was signed? A cynic, and let us beware of cynics, will no doubt remark how even in those benighted days of nineteen years ago, there were men who knew how to climb on the band wagon and grab personal publicity with both hands. Excuse my vulgarity, but this sort of thing moves me in that manner. You will notice the cheap shed of cement and iron, built to shelter the famous Armistice car; look again and remark that no country built it, but a tablet let into the rotting cement announces that

it was the gift of a man who, by "presenting" the shed, obtained fame by a short cut.

I would like to roam with you through the beautiful, romantic, and historic places in the Beauvaisis, but time limits our roving. Let us, then, make for Beauvais itself, and drive toward this country town of the department of the Oise, traveling not too quickly beside the placid-flowing river, past these forests tinged with russet, red and brown, looking at the blue sky spangled with billowy white clouds, the low hills, and remarking the utter peace and content.

Beauvais rivals Rouen, a city to which it bears a very remarkable, although perhaps an undefinable resemblance. Both cities have their heroine, Rouen its Joan of Arc, and Beauvais, once the home of tapestry, its Jeanne Hachette, whose statue stands over there in the middle of the handsome square. Jeanne fought, so the story goes, against an army of 75,000 men led by Charles the Bold. This was in 1472, and it is a lot of men, even if it is not true. I am sorry to say I do not know Jeanne's other name, or if I knew it, I have forgotten it; but Jeanne fought with a hatchet, hence the Hachette. The goodly burghers of Beauvais take this tale very seriously, and once a year, on the last Sunday in June, there is a procession to commemorate the victory of Jeanne Hachette.

On Saturday mornings there is a huge market held on the square around the statue of Jeanne, and peasants drive in from miles around and stand there and offer butter and chickens and eggs and vegetables for sale. Then there come also hawkers selling cloth and underclothes and shoes and stockings which the peasants buy after they have sold their own wares.

Continuing our journey toward Paris we remark on the right-hand side of the road a stone monument erected by

the French to the men who met their death one October night when the giant British airship R101 broke her back across Beauvais Ridge, and if you will hear the true tale of this disaster, into which the author was drawn in spite of himself, let us bring our car up to the side of the road for a few minutes.

Shortly before six one October morning the telephone next to my bedside at Chantilly woke me and a voice speaking from London said that the R101, which had left England the previous night, had crashed at Beauvais. I rose and dressed and went to take my car out of the garage in the pouring rain and drove to Beauvais, twenty-five miles away. When I passed the level crossing I saw a woman taking down the shutters of a café and I asked her if she knew anything about an English airship that had crashed at Beauvais. She said she had heard about it, but it had not happened at Beauvais, it was at Allonge. She pointed to some passing mounted gendarmes and said they would show me the way. I inquired and was told the village was four miles back, off the road by which I had traveled. I drove on in the downpour and reached Allonge, but saw no signs of a crash. A man was coming out of a café; he was the proprietor, and I asked him; he said the wreck was in a field about half a mile away. He said he had seen the airship the night before, "like a big lighted village in the sky," and then the lights had gone out and he did not know what had happened.

The rain had been falling all night and there was mud above my calves when I slithered my way through toward the wreck. In a field between two slight hills there was a terrible sight. It looked at first like the ruins of some outlying factory that had been devastated by fire. There was what looked like a big bare chimney stack. There was the skeleton of what seemed to be a factory. It was a

sight so awful and terrible that one could not take it in at first.

I walked nearer. The wreck was still burning. Flames, hot and angry, were spurting from the wreckage which reared itself above my head like the cliffs on the English Channel. And then there stood out one little pathetic token. Still flying from the stern was the ensign of the R.A.F., scarred and torn like a flag that had been through a battle.

Firemen were at work. Men were hammering and sawing and cutting, all of which heightened the illusion of a wrecked factory. The bushes and low trees were scorched, but that would not account for the smell; and then I recognized it: it was the smell of meat burning in an oven, and the smell reminded me that it was Sunday and that there would be roast beef waiting for me at home for lunch. Then I volunteered to go into the burning wreck and help bring out the dead, and then I knew that there is a close resemblance between burning beef and burning human flesh, and I went into the scorched bushes and was sick.

I went into the wreck with another Englishman named Martin and the French firemen, and we brought out on stretchers charred remains of men who were flying to India. There were torsos with stumps of legs, and there were torsos with stumps of arms, and the stumps were pointing upwards, showing that the men had been burned in their sleep, and they had waked and raised their arms as if to ward off a blow.

Mounted policemen arrived and put a cordon round the wreck. Then other policemen came galloping across the muddy field, and flowing and blowing behind them were sheets; they had been through the village stripping the beds of their sheets, and they had brought them across

the windy, muddy field to be winding sheets or shrouds for the British dead of Beauvais.

While the oil sizzled and spluttered, body after body was being taken out and laid one beside the other in a little wind-shaken orchard. I met a villager who said he had actually seen the disaster. He said he saw the R101 traveling in a high wind, broadside on; suddenly all the lights in the airship went out, and a moment later they went on again, and then out again. He noticed that each time the lights were switched on the airship was a trifle lower in the air. Then while the lights were still on, the airship dived. "There was a mighty explosion; oh, something you can't imagine." He said it was as if the whole world had exploded.

Actually, the first man on the scene happened to be an English racehorse trainer named Darling, a grandson of the famous Newmarket trainer Sam Darling. He went to the burning wreck and saw a man crawl out—the first survivor. The eight men who were rescued alive were the night watch. The injured among the survivors were taken to Beauvais and nursed, well and devotedly, but somebody stole their leather flying suits and their wallets.

And that is the true tale of the disaster to the R101, commemorated by that stone by the roadside over there. Now let us drive on to the little village of Noailles, where we will once again leave the main highway and meander pleasantly through the autumn sunshine to Chantilly.

IX

FRENCH NEWMARKET

ONCE upon a time, when Chantilly was the French Windsor, the Princes and their aides-de-camp were sometimes bored young men. They hunted the deer in the forest, they dallied with the reigning beauties, they ate big meals and they drank deep of fine wines, but they were bored, bored, bored.

One late afternoon they were riding back to the Castle. It was autumn and the russet leaves lay on the ground like a crinkling carpet. There was nothing to do but to look forward to an evening of dice and cards and love by candle-light. Suddenly, what we should call a brain-wave came to a young stripling. "I'll race you to the gates," he said to the Eaglet. No sooner challenged than raced. That autumn afternoon was the foundation of French blood-stock racing.

They raced to the gates, they raced again and again. Once the craze started it spread like mad. Then someone recalled that across the Channel they knew all there was to know about horseracing. They brought over a fellow from Newmarket named Carter. He was the first English racehorse trainer ever to go to France. Today the most prominent trainer in France is named Carter.

We become aware of something English about the countryside as we meander through twisting lanes into a village called Gouvieux. It has a horsey smell and look about it, and over there, you will notice, is an English name over a typical French *estaminet*. You will not fail

to remark that Bass is on sale in this queer little French village in the department of the Oise. What strange things have happened in this out-of-the-way place which is not much more than twenty miles from Paris! All over the world the horse seems to attract the worst of humanity; not the domestic horse, but the racehorse. Strange it is that this beautiful creature should be a magnet to crooks, big and small, and that, indirectly, a small section of England incrusting in a French county should become the scene for so much drama.

Drive on. We are on the outskirts of the French Newmarket now. Notice, please, that many of the training-stables have English names. Look inside the yards. Tiny boys with leather leggings are hanging on to the bridles of jibbing horses. Horses brown, black and gray are being led round in circles. Short, elderly men with bow legs chew straws and look horse-wise.

They lead extraordinary lives, these lads and old men. They are up at the crack of dawn. No English breakfast for them, no strong cups of tea, thick bread and butter. No crisp rashers of bacon and eggs fried to a turn. They left all that behind them when they crossed the Channel so many years ago. Now they are confronted with what tourists call "a Continental breakfast"—a bowl of coffee and milk, and a hunk of bread and butter. Not very sustaining when you have to face a cold dawn, but you get used to it.

When the days get so short that it is dark at four o'clock, racing is over until the spring, but the horses remain in training. Every morning, except when the roads are slippery with ice, the strings of horses go out in the dawn. First there rides the head lad, then the horses, mostly in blinkers and coats, each ridden by a small boy, and ninety per cent of the small boys in Chantilly are

English. Lancashire, Yorkshire and Sussex supply the majority. They are apprenticed and they all hope to become jockeys one of these days. Like Napoleon's soldiers who carried the traditional marshal's baton in their knapsacks, these little English boys hope they carry the whip of a crack jockey in their riding-kit, but few do.

By the time the Chantilly residents are hurrying to catch their trains to Paris, the strings of horses are already back in their stables. The first part of the day's work is over. Walk into the forest and look at the *pelouse* of the world-famed racecourse. The second part of the day's work is beginning. A horse stripped of its blanket is going round and round and round, for all the world like a squirrel in a cage. A man stands in the middle of a circle, and the horse is attached to a long rein, and round and round and round he goes. Neither the horse nor the man appears to be enjoying the performance, but it's all part of the day's work.

While the stable-lads go in to their twelve o'clock dinner, let us stroll across the course. Chantilly is not only the Newmarket of France, but the Epsom as well. There are comparatively few race-meetings held here, but the two classics, the Prix de Diane (French Oaks), and the Prix du Jockey Club (French Derby), are both run here on two Sundays in June.

Over on the right are the grand stands. Nothing much to look at. Across on the left is a block of gray stone. The Royal Stables, but stables no more, just a relic of the time when Chantilly was the French Windsor. And now we stand face to face with a poem in stone, a veritable jewel of a castle, the Château of Chantilly.

This Château is the second one, the first was destroyed by fire. Old prints of the original castle show a dignified enough château. But this second building is surely the

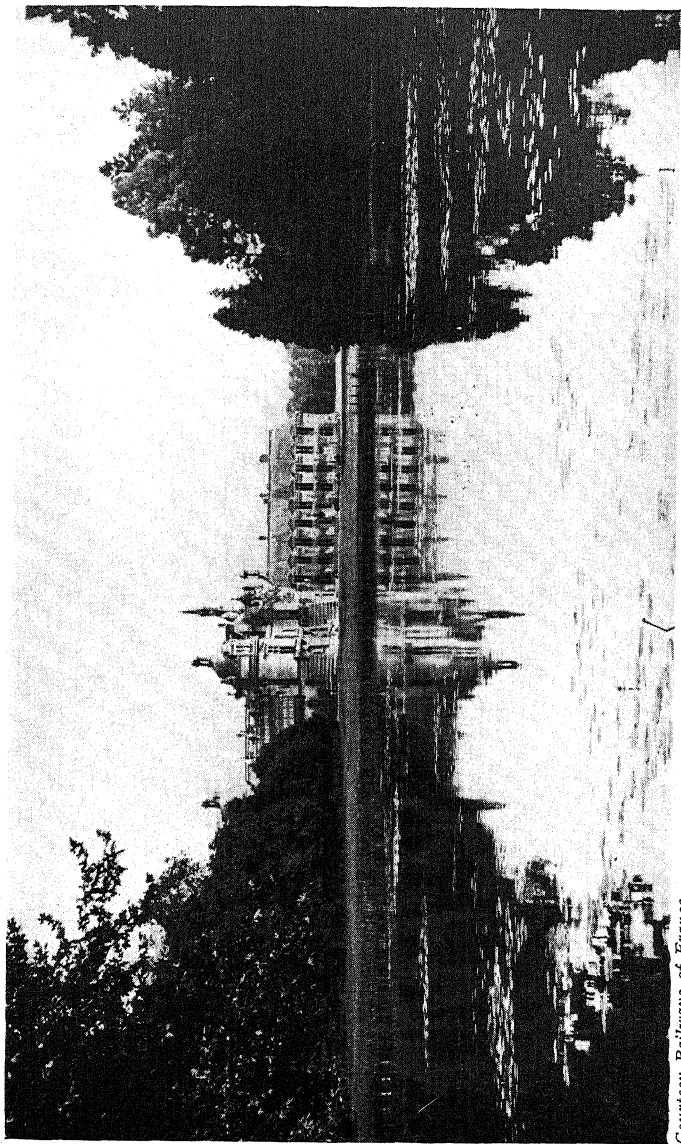
nearest to perfection man ever made in France. The tone is pigeon-gray, the greensward is almost as good as an Oxford lawn, the pinnacles are as graceful as a swan's neck. Ducks swim in the moat and aged carp rise ponderously to the surface to be fed. In the park, peacocks strut and their raucous cries make the night hideous. Deer look mournfully through forest glades, and squirrels shake their brown, bushy tails from the branches overhead. In early spring, daffodils spread a thick yellow carpet, and in May the forest is sweet-smelling because of the lilies of the valley.

What history has been written here! Vatel committed suicide because the fish was late. And Sophie Dawes became Queen of Chantilly. Men have robbed, stolen, plundered, all because long, long ago a young man challenged another to race him to the gates.

The story of Sophie Dawes has been written elsewhere, how this reformatory brat became the mistress of the Duc de Bourbon, how the English girl of lowly birth managed to help shape the destinies of France and to "Queen it" in Chantilly. That is all part of the showmanship of Chantilly. A place where the most unbelievable things happen.

There are many male Cinderellas in Chantilly. Tiny boys picked out of the villages of the North of England and planked down in a small French town. Out of a hundred boys perhaps there is just one who has a pair of hands which may carry him to fame and fortune, just one, and then even . . .

The boy need not be educated; indeed, much better if he isn't, very much better; he will not be so unhappy. They put him on a horse and see how he shapes. If he is any good at all, they make him an apprentice. "They" are the trainers, many of them ex-jockeys themselves.



Courtesy Railways of France

CHÂTEAU OF CHANTILLY



Courtesy Railways of France

PALACE OF VERSAILLES SEEN FROM THE GATES

If the apprentice shows promise he is "given a ride," allowed to ride in a real race on a real course and to wear silk, just like a full blown-in-the-glass jockey. The boy receives the traditional apprentice's allowance in weight. He may win, he may not be allowed to win, but whichever it is, it is still not certain that he has made good. Say just one in two hundred and fifty do make good, and then . . .

The little boy becomes a knight of the pigskin. As soon as his apprenticeship is over he can command a price as a light-weight jockey. Fortune smiles on him, so do the pretty ladies on the racetrack. They hang on his every word because one of the words may mean something that can be translated into hard cash at the *pari-mutuel* booths. Very soon the male Cinderella will be driving his own car through Chantilly; but heaven help him if he does not keep his head screwed on tight. The first season is not the most difficult; the real difficulty comes between the first season and the second, when there is nothing to do and so much time to do it in. It is a case of Satan and idle hands.

There is the Riviera, and a host of pretty ladies; maybe there will be a few mounts at Nice or Cannes, and then the second season, the difficulty of keeping the weight down, the daily run in many sweaters through the Forest of Chantilly, envying the squirrels who are so free and ungoverned.

There is still a boss, there is the trainer for whom one rides, and there is the owner, who comes down in a big motor car early in the morning to see the gallops. But there is more and more money, and more and more pretty ladies; perhaps one will marry him to prevent another getting him, and then Chantilly waits until it hears of the break-up of the marriage. There are clandestine bets;

there are signals with the whip to the "boys" just as one is mounted and one's horse is being led out, just a flash with the whip to say whether one is on the job today.

Drive through Chantilly on your way to the coast. A nice healthy-looking town, is it not? Reminds you of Epsom or Newmarket, perhaps. But this little town, with its pseudo-English air, is only just one contour on the face of France.

Chantilly is many things to many people. There are busy City gents who commute between Chantilly and Paris as regularly as any man does between Surbiton and London, or White Plains and New York. He may get his game of golf on one or the other of the Chantilly links at the week-end, or he may hire a hack and canter through the Forest, he may even go racing occasionally, but of the world of Chantilly he knows nothing at all.

He may have heard of that pathetic little temple beneath the Vicarage of the English Church, where a certain ancient craft holds its meetings, but it is unlikely he will have heard the thrilling story from the very lips of the English padre, of how a certain Englishman dashed into the Vicarage and sought consolation or—suicide.

Perhaps he will have learned the awful tale of the Englishman who, living in Chantilly and making a great splash, suddenly raced, white-faced, in a car to Le Bourget, jumped in a plane and flew away to England because the police were after him for fraud.

It all depends on the company you keep, what you hear. You may drop into the bar of the Hotel Condé and hear the talk of the old-timers, all about Spearmint's Derby, and whether Sceptre was a great mare. Or you may drink Bass in a *bistro* and hear the real low-down: why this or that horse didn't win this afternoon, why the jockey pulled the horse, who paid him to do it, and why,

or who is sleeping with whose wife. It all depends on the company you keep in Chantilly.

You may do as Chantilly does and go to bed at ten, or the devil may be behind you and you go to one of the three dance-halls, the *bals musettes* of this countryside. Stable-boys and hangers-on of the stables are the male dancers, while the servant girls from the trainers' houses and the villas of the wealthy are the females. What a number of mysterious robberies have been planned in these dance-halls—the jewels that have vanished into the night—all planned while a mechanical piano was grinding out a valse! Chantilly has a reputation for robbery. It was from the Castle that the famous Pink Diamond was stolen. What rumors there were, what excellent newspaper stories, and they were all wrong, more's the pity; one wishes that the story about the robbers having come by night in an aeroplane and landing on the racecourse could have been true. It was Edgar Wallace at his best.

Unfortunately, though, the robbery was plotted in a dance-hall, and despite all the elaborate precautions to guard the treasures, the theft was quite easy, and the Pink Diamond was eventually discovered hidden in the core of an apple in the sixth-floor room of a serving wench.

Romance, squalor, wealth, all three dwell easily enough in Chantilly. To the casual eye there is nothing but a rather pretty little town, plenty of nice quiet hotels, a horsey look, something very un-French, rather sleepy in appearance except on race days when an army of petty crooks from Paris invade the little town. There are plenty of English people about. English matrons wheeling English infants. English trainers riding horses as if they and the horse had been cast in one mold.

English people who have been so long in Chantilly

they can speak no word of English. It is rather a fantastic little world, this little bit of England incrusting in the French countryside.

Here come three nice-looking little English boys in Norfolk jackets and leggings. They are going up to the station to buy a newspaper. How jolly they look, how happy, just three jolly little English boys.

"And I says to 'im, the b . . . , I says, 'Look 'ere, you b . . . b . . . , did yer or did yer not promise me fifty francs if I gave 'im a drink before the race? Well, you b . . . , f . . . b . . . ,' I says, 'b . . . well pay up.'"

Just three jolly little English boys.

X

THIS IS PARIS

MY DEAR MARY,

Half my wanderings are over, as you will see, and here I am, for the winter, dug into quite comfortable quarters on the Seine. Yes, really and truly, not facing the Seine, but living in a houseboat-like effect, so much so that when the Seine rises, as undoubtedly it will do, my concierge (a painted lady, *entre nous*) will, I feel sure, tell me that *la maison se trempe les pieds dans l'eau*.

You, in your Putney school, and near to our beloved Thames, are more swaggerly quartered than I am. I am where I am for two very good reasons. *La vie est moins chère*, and I would not live further inside Paris than I am for a Chicago gangster's ransom.

Regarde donc, mon enfant, two windows in my study face the broadest highway in Paris. It flows evenly past my windows, and always there is something happening on it. Big motor-driven barges come down from Rouen, and there are many others flying the Belgian flag, and important-looking steamers that have to have their funnels dragged backwards with a cord so that they can get underneath the bridges. My, what a lot of bridges I can see! There is the Mirabeau bridge right beneath my window, nice and broad and smooth, and right and left there are exciting-looking bridges with the electric Metropolitan trains on top and bridges beneath for foot passengers and wheeled traffic.

I can see no fewer than eight streets from my windows.

Across the river is the swagger Quai d'Auteuil, very austere. Nice big houses and sun parlors, but I am better off than they, because I can look across the river and see them, but all they can do is to see *me*. The coal wharf outside my window where barges sometimes tie up, and the taxi rank, and the Metro station at the corner, and the electric railway that passes the house and looks like a toy train.

Besides all the things I told you I can see, there are a lot more. I can stick my head out of a window and look left and behold the stocky hills of St. Cloud. I look right and gaze on the Trocadero which the workmen are just demolishing for the 1937 Exhibition. Then still another window on my island site presents to me the Eiffel Tower, and in the middle distance, as the artists say, the gray dome of the Invalides.

But at dusk, when I draw the curtains and make my study snug, then, my dear, the effect is what my *bonne*, Madeleine, calls *féerique*. Auteuil rises black, like some Mediterranean mountain. The houses are not houses, but fairy castles, and the windows are multicolored lamps. The Metro train, with its illuminated windows, crosses the bridge like a shiny snake. From my third-floor window, looking across the river, I feel myself on the deck of a luxurious yacht on the Mediterranean, and I am looking at Monte Carlo, all gay and glittering.

In my next letter I will give you news of Paris. Attend well to your lessons and write me soon.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

MY DEAR MARY,

You ask me news of Madeleine and I must tell you I have, as the French say, "thanked her," which always, to

my mind, sounds so much better than our more brutal English way of saying "given her the sack."

We are so close together and yet so far away, we Parisians and Londoners. You swarm with foreign employees, your waiters, your ice cream sellers, and your purveyors of baked chestnuts. We have so few that our "foreigners" are our provincials. I know without asking that the man who sells hot chestnuts at the corner of the Rue de la Convention is an Auvergnat. They always are. Outside the café on the corner of the Quai and the Avenue Émile Zola there is a woman who sells oysters. She is a Bretonne, another "foreigner." She tells me she likes to stand at the corner—and very bleak it must be sometimes—and watch the traffic on the river; it reminds her of her little fishing village. Sometimes, on a Sunday, I see a sailor talking to her, a *payse*, no doubt. He has red cheeks, just like the oyster woman, as red nearly as the *pompon* in the middle of his béret.

I promised you news of Paris, but now I come to write it down it is very uninteresting. They are beginning to get ready for the General Election. They put up wooden boards like school blackboards and they cover them with posters printed on apricot, red or violet paper. Each candidate accuses the other of the most heinous crimes, but Jacques Bonhomme is becoming wiser; he is not much impressed, and that is why he is looking for a leader who will give him action.

Although I am but eight or nine underground stations away from the Opera, the hub of Paris, I go there very seldom. Paris of the tourist does not amuse me, but in my next letter I will tell you something about the exodus from *ce vieux Paris* toward the west, what the Americans call "up town."

Your affectionate

FATHER.

MY DEAR MARY,

When you come to Paris to live they will take you to the Rue de la Paix and explain that this was once the most fashionable thoroughfare of the world, just as my mother used to tell me about the wonderful little eating places there used to be around the Palais Royal.

There was, until recently, a very wonderful restaurant near the Palais Royal, but now it is being pulled down. There are still two or three well-known names left in the Rue de la Paix, but the Street of Peace is almost-empty shops.

It used to be so very smart and animated: the broughams with smart coachmen outside the jewelers and the dress-makers, and at twelve o'clock all the work-girls, the *midinettes* and the *troinettes*, would come pouring out of the workshops, bareheaded, but their hair so nicely dressed, and they would stand about and chatter and go to a little hole-in-the-wall in the Rue des Petits-Champs to buy a sou's worth of *pommes frites* wrapped up in a piece of newspaper, or they would go to a baker's and buy a *croissant* and a tablet of chocolate, and then troop down across the Place Vendôme and into the Tuileries to sit on stone benches and eat their lunches, as chirpy as the sparrows that hopped about the gravel round the benches.

The Champs Élysées used to be all residences, very stately and dignified. Now, there is no dignity at all, but the Avenue is very gay. Trade has invaded the Champs Élysées, the dressmakers have moved there and there are many cafés, big, noisy ones, in the Avenue where there were only two ever. There are many big cinemas and, at night, the beautiful Arc de Triomphe is floodlit. It is lovely, but it is not Paris.

If any ghosts of old Paris still walk these Elysian fields, they will look in vain for the crawling *sapin*, the horse-

drawn cab, the *cocher* with the red face and shiny top-hat. In his place will be a shiny American taxi and a Russian chauffeur.

The old Parisian (*non, non, ma petite, il n'est pas moi*) will mutely try to find the *café chantant*, the Alcazar, and the Ambassadeurs. Polaire, Dranem, Fragson, the Parisians of today have never heard of them, and neither have you, nor will you ever again. But they were amusing people all the same.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

MY DEAR MARY,

My reference in my last letter to the Russian chauffeur reminded me I had forgotten to tell you that I live right in the middle of a little Russian colony. The taxi-drivers on the rank outside the house are all Russians. Once upon a time *all* the Russian drivers in Paris were princes; they are not any more, or if they are, they have forgotten it.

Within a radius of a hundred yards from the house there are three Russian restaurants, all three very cheap and decent. One can eat for eighteenpence. I don't know how they manage it, for I think that many of the Russians hereabouts do not always have eighteenpence for a restaurant meal. I buy my papers from a Russian woman, and sometimes I find myself asking for papers in which I am not at all interested, but the poor soul looks so poor.

Heigho, no more moralizing, I will finish this short note.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

MY DEAR MARY,

Last night I dined at the British Embassy. What a snob, you will say to yourself! My dear, I am a snob; I *like* to dine at the British Embassy. Sir G—— C——

keeps a good table, as they say, and last night he dined *en grand seigneur*, monocled, smart, as if he had been poured into his clothes. The gold plate was "out," and the red roses. A very pretty sight.

Paris sees all too little of the *grand monde*. The Parisians like it for aye that. They see such a little pageantry. No changing of the guard, no Lord Mayor's Show.

They used to have a big military parade on Long-champs racecourse every July 14th, but that faded away with the War, just as the military colors faded out; now we have only the horizon blue, infantry, cavalry and artillery, all alike, all except the St. Cyrians with their snowy shakos.

I wonder what England would be like if they had conscription in times of peace? It makes a vast difference to a young man's outlook, knowing that it is no good settling to any job until after he has finished his service with the Army. Unsettling? No, I don't think so. I find it is a good thing for young men to serve a term under discipline, and meeting all sorts, it tends to give them a true democratic spirit.

You will note I began this letter a snob, and now I am preaching democracy. *Alors, pourquoi pas?* There is no greater snob than your true democrat, and Paris, my dear child, is the spiritual home of democracy. Last night I dined with an Ambassador, tomorrow I shall dine with a laundress, *et tu auras de mes nouvelles*.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

MY DEAR MARY,

I trust you did not take my statement re dining with a laundress *au pied de la lettre*. I said I would, and I did, but the laundress was not my hostess nor I her host. Nevertheless, I dined on the Butte, at the Moulin Joyeux,

and one of the local laundresses I have met so often there ate her *blanquette de veau à l'ancienne* opposite me; and a very estimable fellow—he is a *ramoneur*, a chimney-sweep, as a matter of fact—sat next to me. He had been working late, apparently, and he came in wearing his top-hat, which all French chimney-sweeps wear when they are at work. I had some sorrel soup, a *chateaubriand aux pommes*, a perfect piece of Brie, and a bottle of Medoc, which le Père Gimlac, who presides over the Joyous Mill, particularly recommended. My bill came to fourteen francs, a trifle more than four shillings. The food was good, but the conversation was excellent. The chimney-sweep was rather worried about the future of the Suez Canal. He pointed out, with reason, that the lease expires within the lifetime of young men, *les bleus*, who have just been called up to the colors. He thought that Great Britain would never abandon her claim to the Canal, and he wondered how this will affect Franco-British relations. He sought my opinion, but while he was talking I was wondering to myself how a chimney-sweep in, say, a Chelsea pub would view the future of the Suez Canal? Frankly, I do not know. To cover my confusion I asked my laundress neighbor to tell us what she thought, but she cornered me too, because she wanted to know if English women had really benefited by having secured the vote.

Dear, dear, it is all very confusing; these frivolous Parisians, who stay out dancing all night (isn't that what they believe in Putney?), actually being serious about what should be called the facts of life.

The dear old Butte. Never go near it in late spring or summer, when the tourists' cars are climbing the hill to the Sacré Cœur and when hard-eyed waiters hypnotize the weak and weary to their tables. No, my child, there are

times when the Butte should be avoided like the seven plagues, but now is not the time.

After bidding my neighbors good night I strolled down to the Lapin Agile and passed an hour with Freddy and his guitar. Dear old Freddy, he must be nearly a hundred. He lives in a past that had its heyday somewhere about the Franco-Prussian War. Generations of poets and *chansonniers* have passed through his *cabaret* (yes, darling, cabaret, look up the word, it means pub) and they were all going to conquer Paris *en attendant* the conquest of the world. But they never left Montmartre. Yes, Montmartre, not, dear Lord, no, not the Montmartre of the Rue Pigalle and the Place Blanche, but the other side of the Hill. That is where the poets lived, loved and died. Over the Hill to the poor house.

I'll try and give you a more cheerful picture of Paris in my next letter. Au revoir.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

MY DEAR MARY,

The Seine is flooding, but I don't think it will be very bad, although it is already quite exciting because the river rises so quickly that getting flood protection ready is like preparing a city to withstand a siege. Seine traffic has ceased and people can no longer fish. Those who point to the French as jumpy, nervous people can never have walked along the Paris banks of the Seine and watched the fishermen, nearly always standing, partly frozen, for hours and hours. Like the man biting a dog, it would be news if someone caught a fish.

As I say, there are no fishermen today because the quaysides are flooded. The barges are tied up and the waters are over the coal wharf. Stokers working the cranes are knee-deep in water. All this means anxiety and worry to

riverside Paris. Men are piling up sandbags to hold back the floods from the waterside streets, but the Parisians do not care much. The center of their observation is the Alma Bridge; they go and stare at the titanic zouave whose shoulders support the main span of the bridge. When the Seine rises above the stone soldier's knees, matters begin to be serious and Parisians throw their memories back to 1910 when the Seine flowed over the Place de la Concorde and people went to the St. Lazare Station in boats. The Seine was so high that it was touch-and-go whether they blew up the Alma Bridge to relieve the pressure. That will not happen now, but it is exciting all the same. By tomorrow the Seine may be in my cellar. There used to be a comedian named Dan Leno who was always talking about buying a property which sometimes had the river at the bottom of the garden, and sometimes the garden at the bottom of the river.

Riverside Paris is like that, a surprise packet. One never knows.

The French have a delightful expression *se balader*, almost untranslatable into highfalutin English; the Germans call it to *bummel*, and in American *argot* they say "to bum around," not elegant, but expressive. To potter about is, I suppose, the nearest we can get to it. Well, I like to potter about among the books and engravings all along the quays. The keepers of these stalls do not fear the floods. Business as usual is their motto. Napoleon called the English a nation of shopkeepers, but I wonder whether we are more *shopkeepery*, if I may coin a word, than the French?

One of the most unusual trades or professions in Paris is that of the man who stands on the pavement with a stick when there are men working on the building overhead. His job is to warn people to watch out so as not to

get either brick or mortar on their heads, but business as usual goes on in the shop below.

To return to the bookstalls along the quays. Many an old, or at least elderly, edition of an English book have I picked up, including one of the green Thackerays.

When I first came to Paris there was a queer old Englishwoman who kept a bookstall. I never knew how much of her life story was true and how much imaginary. It was all very romantic, anyway, and included a tale of forcible detention in Barcelona.

Paris used to have many curious characters. One was an Irishwoman who was always in the Tuileries. She used to run what today would be known as a racket. She would pick out the obvious English or American and get into conversation and deftly steer a course to discover the occupation of the stranger. Then she would promise a wonderful job, all ready and waiting for the applicant. The catch was very small: to purchase a small charm which the Irish lady had in her reticule. It cost but a franc.

If you don't think too badly of my attempts to tell you about the city I love so much, then I will continue in my next.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

MY DEAR MARY,

The old *boulevardiers* always tell me that Paris is not what it was; possibly it never was, but I, who never knew the Bals Masqués at the Opera, am quite content to visit the theater for the unique reason of seeing a play or hearing an opera. I do not think that the standard of music at the Paris Opera is a very high one; the audience, for smartness, does not compare with the "dressiness" one sees at Covent Garden or the New York Metropolitan. The French are not musical in the sense that our people of

Yorkshire and Lancashire are; they are not performers. The French are a nation of listeners!

We have the National Opera House, and the Opera Comique, both State-subsidized homes of music, and we have two municipal homes of music in Paris. Not a bad record, but somehow we do not get the singers.

Theatrically speaking, Paris makes no progress. The Comédie Française, the House of Molière, as the journalists call it, has had one foot in the theatrical grave for some time. The plays and the players are so old that they creak. Plays, the old plays, not those that make us uncomfortable because they "date," but the others, the fine ones, they can be made more attractive by the application of modern devices, but in Paris they will not hear of them.

The front of the house is as it was when my grandmother was young. The three glowering gentlemen in evening dress who examine the tickets, the gangster program seller, the old ladies with pink bows in their hair who show you to your seats, *les ouvreuses*, and who snarl if they think the tip is insufficient, they are still there with the bandits of the cloakrooms. It is all part of the Paris pageant, no doubt, and it is as much part of the city as the café terraces, so we grumble and complain, but in our heart of hearts, more especially our Anglo-Saxon hearts, we should sigh if there were changes, and we should murmur to the new generation that Paris was not what it was.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

MY DEAR MARY,

I see in your letter which reached me yesterday that you want to know something about cafés, and you ask me why they cannot have cafés in London. I will answer, or try to answer, the last question first by saying that one

supposes that nobody has really tried to introduce the French café with the terrace to London. It cannot be the climate. Since a few years the cafés on the Grands Boulevards have, with glass screens and electric heaters, made the terrace an all-weather institution. It could be done in London, I think, with success, but, to tell you the truth, the Paris café is dying.

The café was, and in the provinces still is, the Frenchman's club; he goes there to read the newspapers, write his letters, meet his friends, and in the evenings play a few hands of *manille* or *belotte*, two card games peculiar to France.

The post-war generation of male Frenchmen, and more particularly male Parisians, has less interest in café life than its fathers. The Parisians eat less and drink less than they used to, and they are more active. They "go in for" sports and are less disposed to sit about talking and playing cards. My remarks apply mostly to the center of the city and less to *les quartiers*.

Over on the Left Bank you may still see love and romance in a small café. On a wet afternoon, when the light is bad, you will find a young painter and his model-sweetheart sitting sipping one or the other of these pretty sirupy liquids the French adore. They sit close to the round stove and warm themselves because they are without money to pay for coal in the studio. Over by the door an elderly waiter, who has seen two or maybe three generations of painters in and out of the cafés he has served, is standing watching the downpour splash into the brown puddles. The rain slackens, finally stops. A pale ray of sunshine comes in through the glass-paneled door. The waiter sighs, half sadly, half gladly. He glances at the couple by the stove. "It's stopped," he calls.

The man pays and the couple leave, laughing and jumping over the puddles, to get back to the studio.

Ah, well and alack-a-day.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

MY DEAR MARY,

There is something more than a hint of spring in the air this fine morning. Tiny buds are beginning to open on the plane trees separating this house from the river. This morning, too, they towed along a freshly painted swimming bath, an open-air affair, and anchored it along the quayside away across the Seine on the Right Bank. English people are supposed to be fresh-air fiends, and Americans love to talk about "God's out of doors," but I really wonder whether there is a nation which lives as much in the open air as the French.

I have written you about the fishing fiends always to be seen along the Seine, on both sides of the river, and not long ago I wrote about the cafés—although all café life is certainly not open-air life, but when I think of a café I instinctively, as a foreigner, think about the terrace, the open-air side of it. Then you get the benches along the Boulevards, and the Champs Élysées, and all the open spaces which are never closed up, as the English parks are.

And just then I looked up from my desk and spied another harbinger of spring: the *bateau-mouche*, the fast-moving "fly-boat," the river omnibus that plies for hire right through the City and out into the open country beyond. Another popular way of staying out of doors. Away out around Suresne and St. Cloud there are tiny little restaurants dotting the banks of the river. *Friture de la Seine*, a mixed catch from the river fried in a sizzling pan is the main dish, and not at all bad. How the

Parisians adore their river! The Boulevard is for a stroll, but the Seine is for a Sunday afternoon, or a nice spring evening.

Very soon the chestnut buds, fat oily things, will be bursting open in the Champs Élysées. Gustave, my favorite waiter at Fouquet's, will be booming: "*Un bock, un . . .*" on the terrace, and then I shall know that spring is here.

Spring in Paris! Don't those three words sing? Spring in Paris! A blue sky empty but for a few whitey clouds that look like giantess's powder-puffs. New hats for the ladies and new bills for the gentlemen. Green along the Boulevards and the river. Open taxis prowling along. Restaurants putting out newly painted chairs and tables for lunch and dinner on the terrace. Drives in the Bois. The tinkle of ice in tall glasses. Spring in Paris!

The flower-market behind the Madeleine looking like a lovely crazy quilt, big bunches of lilac, lavender and white, sweet-smelling violets, dark blue and light. Yellow *coucou*s, as they call the wild daffodils that reflect the sun. Spring in Paris!

Halcyon days at the races, dinners in quaint little almost unknown places. Lovely, lovely Paris in the spring.

Soon, my daughter, you will be with me, so this letter will be my last, and then you and I will go a-roaming. Until then, au revoir.

Your affectionate

FATHER.

XI

RETREAT TO THE FOREST

ONE of these days it will occur to someone with the necessary authority to erect guideposts within the confines of Paris to indicate to motorists how to leave the city and find their way out without wasting time and bad language. Likewise coming in from without, it would be good to find indication of the way, say, to the Place de l'Opéra.

I sit at the wheel and think a bit. I am going to Barbizon, where the painters erect their easels, where the forest in spring is such a delicate shade of pale green that it seems unreal, almost theatrical. I am going to Barbizon, but how?

I decide on a route. I drive along the quayside, on the Left Bank. The barges are bumping along, cutting through the water made choppy by a strong spring breeze; some are strung along tow ropes, dragged by a puffing tug, others, electrically propelled, ride authoritatively alone. Cranes rattle, coal is hauled up from the anchored boats and dumped into lorries. Working Paris, not the Paris of the tourist.

I drive alongside the towering Tower of Eiffel, and feel like an ant in a flea circus. The Tower is a veteran of the World War; somebody should have written a book about it. From the crest of the Tower operators speak at night to the far places of the earth. The Tower in those days had the most powerful radio in the world. It picked up German propaganda, and it sent out French

versions. Now the Tower is still ticking out even more powerful pieces. Majestically Eiffel's masterpiece stares across the Seine at a gaping void which used to be the Trocadero. Exhibitions in Paris come and go, but the Eiffel Tower is there for ever.

I am on my way to Barbizon, past the Chamber of Deputies, where one instinctively makes mental comparisons with Westminster and Washington, not, it must be confessed, in favor of the Chamber, which is a Parliament very much in the Continental manner. If it challenges comparison, it loses.

On my way, this spring afternoon, along the Boulevard St. Germain, still too often referred to as if it were London's Mayfair, whereas it is today just another boulevard. Once upon a time, when people drove in broughams and barouches and landaus, the Boulevard St. Germain was ultra-chic, and so very smart that every novelist who married a male character to a French girl always introduced her as coming from the Faubourg St. Germain, a shadowy place of make-believe. Now the Boulevard has some pleasant restaurants, is the home of the Institute of the Legion of Honor, and has a lasting abiding place on menus as the name of a soup. Potage St. Germain sounds so much nicer than pea soup.

On my way, up and along the Boulevard Raspail, that nondescript street with an underground railway down the middle and flowers and shrubs on top.

Retreat to the Forest, but a lot of threading of narrow streets to be first negotiated. The Lion of Belfort. Let's go round him, then another boulevard, with another underground railway, but not covered in, no flowers or shrubs, just plain utility. Along and along, dipping down and then going up. Like the lift girls in London. Going DOWN! Going UP!

Here is another big square with a bandstand, but no band. What a wonderful place Paris is, we exclaim, as if we were seeing it for the very first time. And that happens to be Paris, always something new to discover. You never finish with it. It is not like New York, which becomes familiar so quickly, or like London, which is so huge that you give it up in despair; you cannot ever get to *know* it anyway. But Paris! Lucky Parisians; they have learned how to enjoy their streets; they are not just avenues to go places, they are meant to be enjoyed. Innumerable are the uses of the Paris streets, we reflect, as we slow down to allow pedestrians to cross between the steel-studded passages, and to allow others to cross who are not walking, as they should, within the allotted spaces.

Many uses. A Parisian, and a foreigner, too, if he is sensible, as soon as spring comes, thinks of eating in the open air. He can spend a lot of money and go and eat in the Bois de Boulogne, or he can spend a shilling or two and eat happily and well in many streets. No mean city is Paris. The plasterer and the mason working on the house over on the corner find a choice of restaurants with zinc tables and wooden chairs. The white-collar brigade find quite a number of restaurants with white tablecloths, and you, sir or madam, will find something to suit yourself, shrubs to hide your appetite from the vulgar gaze of the passer-by. White tablecloths of a certainty, and all for no more than it costs you to go down below the ground and gnaw a chop. Query, why are grill rooms in England almost *always* below ground?

The streets are the playgrounds of the grown-ups, we remember, as we gaze innocently at a traffic policeman who glares at us disapprovingly. Look at the fairs, the street fairs, all *over* the place, as it were. Why, there is never a time, winter *or* summer, or spring, too, for that

matter, when there is not a fair going on somewhere or other. The fun of it! The freaks and the circus and the side shows and the try-your-luck-and-your-skill, the popcorn and all that. Great fun!

Benches, too, along the curb, beneath the shady trees, where Jean Baptiste can court his Marie-Louise in comfort, by day or by night. The French think the English are so gross they *have* to close their parks at night. No good putting our foot down on the accelerator yet. Here is the Porte d'Italie, once one of the gates of Paris, but now just a memory. Not so long ago they used to come and measure the petrol in your tank, measure it with a stick, and then laboriously write on a piece of paper the quantity, so when you came back to Paris, a day, a week, or a year later, you showed the piece of paper, and if you had more petrol in your tank, after they had measured it with a stick, you paid duty on the difference. That's how it was. If you had bought new-laid eggs, or a chicken in the country, you paid duty on that, too. Octroi, they called it. Very quaint, but an awful nuisance.

Now we go along the Boulevard d'Italie. We approach Villejuif, Jew Town, which it probably was long, long ago. Here is the monthly market called the *Marché aux Puces*, the Flea Market; no doubt there is some connection between Villejuif and the market, but the salesmen in this old iron and junk market today are not Jews. It is one of the most famous markets in Europe. There is nothing, from a puppy to a parasol, that you cannot buy, if you be so inclined. The market starts early in the morning and goes on until night, and thousands of people come from all parts and bid their way through. Some of them even buy, but buyers or sightseers, they are all a nuisance and a danger to motorists; they have an unfor-

fortunate habit of stepping off the pavement backwards, back to you, I mean.

On my way, it is getting late, but that does not matter, France is one of those fortunate countries where one can always, any hour of the day or night, find something to eat and to drink, and no favors, either.

Now we can step on it a little, I think; the traffic is thinning out, the avenue is a little wider, but we must slow up again, because here is one of the largest cemeteries on the outskirts of Paris, and there are at least half a dozen flower shops where mourners are buying flowers for graves.

Now on again, faster and faster. On our way, on our way. The cobbles make a good road, when they are well and truly laid, and they are hereabouts. Faster and faster, between the tall, straight trees, and onward toward the huge airship shed which marks the airport of Orly.

Here are the aerial defenses and also the training center for civilian pilots. Hundreds of planes are aloft, but the inhabitants are so used to the hum and the noise that they take no notice; nevertheless, it is not wise to linger. Armed sailors guard the approaches, for, fantastically enough, Orly aerodrome, on the outskirts of Paris, ranks as a naval station.

Spin along, little car. Foot well down now. We are coming to a big dip which is Corbeil, and here is the home for old and hard-up theatrical people. On and on and on. It will be dark when we reach the Forest, but who cares?

It is dark. Dark and silent. The sky above is blue-black, and filmy clouds drift across. They seem low, as if there were big windy spaces between clouds and sky.

It is as if we had lost our way and had entered a new world inhabited only by trees. The headlights of our car shine along empty spaces. Wide, empty avenues open

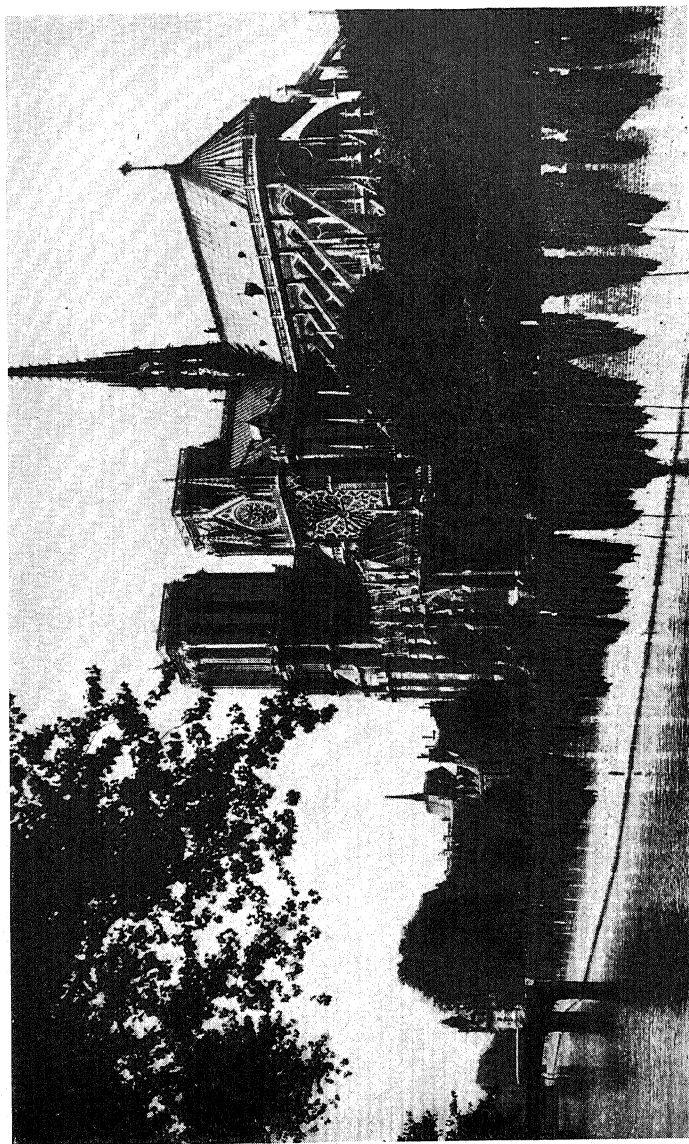
out from big empty *carrefours*. And the clouds drift by over the treetops. It is eerie, the silence, only the hum of the engine breaks it. We switch off the engine. The trees bend this way and that, tall, graceful maidens in dark green, swaying their hips and the tops of their bodies, their heads nodding to one another, while a sibilant whisper flutters along like the murmuring of ghostly lovers.

From far ahead along the empty road comes a purring hum, and the brow of the hill is lit as by the first rays of the morning sun. In a blinding flash two discs of burning light scorch us, and, with a roar, a car passes us, tearing up the silence of the spring night, but making the silence all the more awesome a second after the roar has died away.

Smoking, thinking, reflecting on this and that, in other words, being delightfully idle, several hours have passed since we first drove into the Forest of Fontainebleau. It is too late tonight to look up our host, the painter, who goes to bed soon after his chickens go to roost, and who indulgently remembers that if we do not arrive tonight we shall most certainly be there tomorrow. Good French habits, every man an individualist; do as thou likest so long as thou doest no harm unto others.

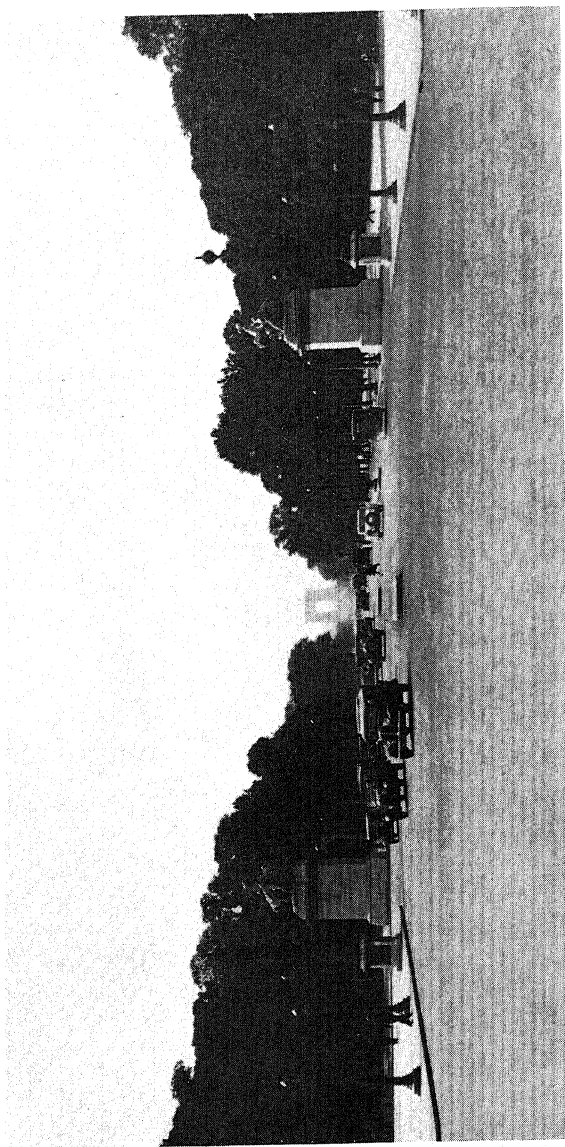
We must look for a lodging for the night, not a particularly easy task, as we are not familiar with the Barbizon hostelries except as an occasional guest; we have never tried their beds. It is not so late in the ordinary way, but unless it is the "season," Barbizon retires early. We start up the engine and head for Barbizon. Winding lanes through the Forest bring us soon enough to the little out-of-the-way village which artists have for so many years made their own.

It is dark and deserted, not a light to be seen. We drive



Courtesy Railways of France

CATHEDRAL OF NOTRE DAME, PARIS



Courtesy Railways of France

THE CHAMPS ÉLYSÉES, PARIS, WITH THE ARC DE TRIOMPHE IN THE DISTANCE

slowly through the one street. There are hotels, but no lights. We are cowardly enough to switch off the engine and go on foot to our host's villa, to look, whether by chance . . . a little cold meat, a salad, a bottle of beer, a solitary pipe before turning in, but no, as silent as the grave. If he has beef and beer (yes, he is an Englishman, although he has been here five and twenty years) it is put away in the larder and I shall not sample it until tomorrow, but what about tonight?

On the very edge of the village, but in the Forest, is a small hotel, standing in a private park. It looks pretty good, and through a first-floor window a light is shining. I leave the car standing outside the gate, and walk along the path to the hotel, purposely scrunching the gravel so that my footsteps in the night may attract the attention of whoever is on duty—as I hope—and I may not be mistaken for a prowling tramp.

The front door is wide open. I look for a bell, but there is no bell. I knock with my knuckles on the glass panel; I knock again and again, but there is nothing but silence. I go in the hall and find there are six doors, all shut. There is a staircase at the end of the narrow hall. I go up. The corridor is black except for an oblong of light which proves to be an open door. At the side of the open door is a man's pair of shoes, put outside to be cleaned, no doubt. I knock on the panel of the open door, there is no reply. I go into the room. It is a bedroom, but there is nobody and no sign of anybody. The electric light is full on, and the window is wide open, and I look out and realize this was the light I had seen from the road. But I am no nearer finding a bed for the night. What shall I do? Shut the door, lock it, go to bed and pretend I heard nothing if someone should come along and try to get back into the room? I am too cow-

ardly to do that, and besides, I am hungry, not to say thirsty.

I go downstairs again, and then I go up, as I have an idea that the occupant of the room may be taking a bath. I try to find a bathroom, and do find one, but it is empty; and then I go downstairs again, and by this time I am becoming thoroughly nervous and defeated. I step on something that cracks; I peer down and pick up a steel-rimmed pair of glasses which my foot has smashed. Then I go upstairs again, but there is no longer an oblong of light. The corridor is all dark. I creep along and find that the fourth door, which had been wide open, is now shut, and there is no light to be seen beneath the door. I am utterly defeated and afraid. I must have been twenty minutes in the house and never heard a sound, but someone must have gone into the lighted room, turned off the light and shut the door.

I go back to the gate, walking on the grass, so that my feet shall not scrunch the gravel and attract the attention of whosoever may be watching me from the darkened window on the first floor of this ghostly hotel in the Forest.

I switch on the engine and drive slowly along the street. I stop in front of a hotel which, like the others, is in darkness. I ring the bell, and presently the bolts are pulled back and a man in shirt and trousers opens the door without a word. I leave the car outside and take my bag with me. I ask if I can have a room, and the man nods, not speaking. He looks very sleepy. I look at my wrist-watch. It is eleven o'clock.

I am shown the way upstairs. The man has not spoken. As he unlocks the door I say to him, "What sort of hotel is that at the end of the street, just on the edge of the Forest?" He looks at me for two seconds, but answers

nothing. He goes out and closes the door. I lock it and get undressed. I have forgotten I was hungry. I turn off the light and open wide the window and the closed wooden shutters. I am looking over the top of apple trees in blossom. A bright moon rides high above the bending trees, and there is a fluttering sibilant whisper like the murmurings of ghostly lovers.

The sun shines through the casement in the morning and wakes me. It is very early, but I cannot go to sleep again. The room is small and ugly. It has yellow wall-paper with big flowers on it, the counterpane is bright red. The bed is wood, but the mattress is thick, downy, and comfortable. I ring a bell—in hotels of this sort one can ring any time—and the same man who let me in comes and I tell him I want a bowl of coffee and milk and some bread and butter; he nods, but does not speak. In twenty minutes he is back with a round bowl without a handle; there is hot black coffee in a small brown jug, hot milk in another brown jug, a small glass affair with nine oblong lumps of sugar, a hunk of warm bread, a blob of pale yellow butter, and a small knife with a black bone handle, and a metal spoon. My breakfast.

An hour later I ring again. The chambermaid, not the French *soubrette* of comic opera, but a hard-faced woman who is quite possibly the wife of the silent man who let me in last night, answers the bell. I ask for some hot water. I know better than to expect a bath.

I am clothed and very much in my right mind. Here is spring and here is the Forest. Clearly an early-morning ramble is indicated before I seek my host, who does not rise early, anyway.

There is no wind. The tall maidens are not engaged in dancing a measure. They stand upright and still and

wear robes of the palest green. The sky is pale blue, and there are clouds like big powder-puffs, but this morning there are no signs of empty windy spaces between the clouds and the sky.

There are few people this morning in the Forest. The deer and the squirrels and the birds and I share its glories and its beauties. No wonder artists come to paint and remain as long as they can. Throughout the spring the Forest is one gladsome song of green beauty. Some may like it in summer, but for me a forest in high heat has no attraction; when autumn comes, however, the shades of red and yellow and russet and brown, all mingled as the greatest Artist of all mixes His colors, why, then the symphony of color atones for the sadness which is caused by the dying year.

In the Forest there are many strange things to be seen. Stones, moss-covered and ancient looking, which remind of Druids and the Stone Age. Stones that take fantastic shapes, huge grim-looking boulders. But that is all that is grim about Barbizon. The rest is just peace and beauty and color. The eye becomes tired when the brain tries to count the various shades of green to be seen. The green of the many different trees, the green of the sward, of the ferns, and the greenness of the leaves as the sun shines through the treetops and makes a criss-cross pattern on the paths.

It is time to pay my visit. A very short journey, a mere ten minutes, and I am with my grizzled old painter friend, who asks for the latest news of Paris as if it were leagues away, instead of fifty miles. But that is how it is, one grows that way in France, content without restlessness. Why, I know people who live on the Butte of Montmartre and look down on Paris both geographically and mentally. They would not think of going to Paris,

except for some festive occasion, or possibly to see a dentist.

So with the folks at Barbizon. They are sorry for the Parisians, and besides, even in these days a journey to Paris is no light affair. There is a cumbersome steam tram which runs—although runs is not the word—from Barbizon to Melun, and from there one must take a train to Paris Gare de Lyon, and then quite a taxi-ride into Paris.

We discuss Paris, politics, ships, and sealing wax, and then we decide we will walk to Fontainebleau and once again visit the château.

Some people go to Fontainebleau to eat of the famed cream cheese, others to feed the carp in the Castle moat. I confess I go for two reasons: to look at the bathroom of Napoleon Bonaparte—it fascinates me—and to stand on the steps and try to reconstruct Napoleon's farewell to the Old Guard.

You wander through the Castle with a guide—you need not listen, I never do—and you look at the furniture and try not to hear the droning of the guide's voice—he at any rate is just sizing you all up and wondering what sort of a tip you are good for—and then you come to the bedrooms and you say to your wife, "Gosh, fancy them sleeping in rooms like that!" And then you come to the end of a passage and there is the bathroom. You look at the dismal little hole in the wall, the terrible bath, and if you have a mind like mine you say to yourself or even to your wife, if you think of it, you say: "Just fancy, Napoleon who crossed the Alps, captured Moscow, gave France a set of laws which exist until this day, fought us in Egypt, Belgium and Spain, beat the whole of Europe, founded the Comédie Française, who all but invaded England and

set his family up in the king business, *just look where he had to have his bath.*"

The higher you climb, the greater distance there is for you to fall. Pride goeth . . . but was Napoleon proud, and if he was, had he not good reason to be?

The Old Guard is drawn up in the courtyard. They know it is the end. *Le patron* is coming to say good-by. Of course it is the end, *les angliches* won't let him get away, they will tie him up, and never again will he lead us. It's good-by, I tell you.

The Old Guard dies, but it never surrenders. It is dying now, dying on its feet, with its boots on. Tears are running down the cheeks of many of the men as they stand shoulder to shoulder, nervously fingering their muskets.

Here he comes, down the steps, walking slowly, a little ungainly on his feet as stockily built, broad-shouldered men very often are. His face is gray, his eyes burning brightly, as if he had fever, and the eyes are deeply sunken. He played and he lost, and now he is paying his losses.

He looks at his favorites, and they stare straight in front of them. He walks among them, his body sways from side to side when he stops to speak a few words to men he knows; he is tired and worn out, burnt out. There is no more fight left, it has all gone, and the sleepless night has left its mark on his visage. But Napoleon faces it, he can "take it" as they say nowadays, he will not whimper in defeat. He even conjures up a smile, playfully pulls an ear of a soldier, pats some of them on the shoulder, and moves on toward the gate.

There the picture fades out, but when I concentrate on it, it is as real to me as if I had been standing on the steps, watching the scene in all its pathos.

Well, here we go, off again, back to Barbizon, to the Forest, to the shiny green glades, the Forest that has been a background for so many pictures of French history.

Now we go east, along the straight roads lined with poplar trees, between the fields where white oxen patiently work beneath the yoke, through the highways of eternal France.

XII

VILLAGE LIFE

AS you drive slowly through almost any small French village you will notice time and again a woman wearing very deep mourning; she will be wearing a small hat of black, a black dress, and a veil so black that it seems as non-transparent as the *yashmak* of an Arab woman. Instinctively you will think of the woman as a recently bereaved widow, but when I tell you that the mourning is in all probability the last mark of respect paid to a dead sister-in-law, you may be surprised.

Family affairs in France are very complicated, and nowhere more so than in small villages. The two things that matter are money and death. A birth means nothing more than a christening, the choosing of a godfather and a godmother, and the presentation of a box of sugar-coated almonds known as *dragées*. I'll put marriage somewhere between birth and death, because in the country it is often quite the right place to put marriage. Marriage legitimizes an illegitimate child, but any man can go before the mayor and formally declare that a child is his, and immediately that child becomes legitimate. Marriage plays no part at all in such an act. The well-known marriage of convenience is less frequent in villages than it is in cities, and the lower one goes in social strata, the more marriages of affection one finds.

A village wedding, except in certain well-defined provinces, such as Normandy, for instance, is a humdrum affair. There is both a civil and a church ceremony. The bridal

couple and the relations walk arm in arm, looking very self-conscious. Black is worn both for weddings and for funerals, except, of course, by the women. Then after the ceremony there will be a meal, and at the end of the meal guests will get up and sing, without any musical accompaniment. In some cases there will be dancing to an accordion. Then the bridal couple go to their new home, and in the morning they go to work.

Death has much more pageantry. Despite the separation of the Church and the State, and despite the spread of Communism and Socialism, the Roman Catholic Church in the villages is as strong as ever. The two most important men in the village are the curé and the mayor. The curé attends all family functions, and despite sneers, he is revered. The rôle of the mayor is peculiar in France. Let us walk into this little café-tabac.

There is only one man to be seen, and he is without either coat or waistcoat, and his shirt-sleeves are rolled up. There is a gray stubble of several days on his chin, his trousers are well worn, and on his feet are what are known as *pantoufles*, felt slippers. He is puffing his pipe, and the pretty girl behind the corner of the zinc counter where they sell tobacco is his daughter.

Perhaps you have guessed who the man is? Yes, he is Monsieur le Maire, although he does not look so. On high days and holidays the mayor will wear a tricolor sash, and also what they call in French slang a stove-pipe or an eight-reflects, which in politer language is known as a top-hat, and he will also don an ancient garment known as a *frack*, or what is called in Anglo-Saxon countries a frock-coat or a Prince Albert.

The mayor has no absolute judicial authority, he does not sit on a bench and hold trial; but if a man or a woman suspects his partner of infidelity and believes he can catch

the parties in what they call in French guilty conversation, the aggrieved person can go to the mayor, who adorns himself with the tricolor, the badge of office; and then the mayor obtains the services of a locksmith, and with the aggrieved person, the mayor and the locksmith go and make what is known as a *constatation* which forms the first grounds for a divorce.

The mayor also has to stamp the many papers with which a Frenchman goes through life from the cradle to the grave. Life begins with a birth certificate and ends with an act of decease, to show that one is legally dead. In between there is the family book, which shows who you are, and what were the names of your father and your mother, and when you marry that is entered up, and the names of your children are entered up; births and deaths all go in the family book, and each time there is an entry Monsieur le Maire gives a boom! with a rubber stamp. Scattered through the leaves of the book are words of good advice to fathers and mothers.

But that is only part of the many documents a Frenchman has to carry on him, all of which concern the mayor. There is an elector's card, without which a Frenchman cannot vote, and that has to be legalized by the mayor. Then there is the judicial card, which is less pleasant. If a man gets into trouble with the police he gets a card, and that card has to be stamped by the mayor. Then a soldier comes home to the village on furlough, and the mayor stamps that permit, and if a man has four or more children he obtains a special card which entitles him to travel on the railway at reduced rates, and again the mayor stamps the card.

At civil weddings the mayor in his tricolor sash is the central figure. He marries the couple, and that marriage is the only one the State recognizes; and the mayor makes

a speech, and then he shakes hands with the couple, and he goes home to lunch with them and makes another speech, and at the end of the meal it is quite likely that the mayor will sing his little song. It will be a sentimental ditty in which *mari* rhymes with *patrie*, for in village life the *patrie* is always just round the corner.

In the dreaded moment when war comes, the bell in the church tower is tolled by Monsieur le Curé. The mayor puts on his tricolor sash. The town crier, who in France is a drummer and, in his spare time, acts as assistant to the mayor, takes his drum and with the mayor goes out into the village street. The taps of the drum mingle with the tolling of the bell.

Men in the fields stop work and look blank. Women dash for home, to be ready when the men come back. The mayor reads the proclamation for mobilization, and then the drum taps, taps, and taps, and the bell goes on tolling its awful warning, and from the other end of the village street the mayor again reads the message that France demands her sons from the fields and the workshops to go and defend *la patrie*.

Talk of war brings me back to death, and death brings me back to the subject of money. They are all so closely entwined. Death in a French village is no great adventure. The curé having given the last rites of the Church, the dying person passes on, certain of reaching Heaven. But there is Hell for the relatives when they start splitting up the estate.

In France a son or daughter cannot be disinherited, neither does the firstborn obtain the lion's share of what is left. Nominally everything is divided equally among the children, but it is very difficult to divide a field growing, say, potatoes. Notice has to be given to children who may have left the village years before. No steps can be

taken before all living children have signed papers. The mayor is kept very busy, and the notaire is not slack. The objection of one person to, say, a decision to sell a piece of land and divide the proceeds, may cause a commotion compared to which the World War was a mere fracas. Those who have read Zola's *La Terre* will understand to what lengths French peasants are willing to go to obtain a very small advantage over a brother or sister. Times have not changed. You have only to read the *faits divers* in the French Press, the news told in a few lines, to understand what happens day after day.

You have then the close association between death and money. But whereas death does not, so to speak, rule life in a French village, meaning that the truly religious, of whom there are so many, do not fear death as an end, the passion for money entwines itself in the very roots of life. The man may be the money-maker, but it is the woman who takes care of the family exchequer, and very well indeed she does her job.

Not only in the villages, but in the small towns and also in the suburbs of the big towns, yes, including Paris, you will find the wife of the *patron* sitting at the seat of custom. The wife of the hairdresser takes your money and gives you your change with a smile, at the same time keeping an eye on you to see what sort of tip you give the assistant. The wife of the grocer and greengrocer and the wine shop and the spouse of the small café keeper all take the money and look after the books of the establishment. The husband is quite content that it should be so. On Sundays and holidays, when the family goes to the cinema, or to the café for a glass of beer each for husband and wife, one only, and a small glass of fruit sirup and water for each child, you may notice that it is the wife who takes

out her purse and pays, and who grudgingly pushes over a few centimes tip to the *garçon*.

Life in the villages is on the whole kept on a highly moral plane. What the young son may do is literally nobody's business. He is expected to have a mistress. But the daughter is brought up to get married to somebody the parents choose. Whether the girl is pretty or not carries no weight in the final argument. It is a question of how much money she has got, what her *dot*, her marriage dowry, is. The *dot* is dying out in the upper strata of French life, but in the lower strata, among the small shopkeepers, it is as live a question as it ever was. Marriage is easier to arrange than it was, that is the only difference. Parents do not insist on so much money as they used to do, but that is merely because the War and its aftermath made life in France so much more difficult and complex that there is less money in circulation, or to be more accurate, less money in that famous lisle stocking. Once upon a time the peasant hoarded gold in the stocking, and when the gold vanished he hoarded silver, and when the silver vanished, too, he hoarded paper money. To hoard is human, to spend divine.

And yet, despite the French disposition to hoard, to save individually rather than to deposit in a bank, there are no people I know who give so easily to beggars and street singers and other camouflaged forms of begging. It is rare to see a street singer go unrewarded, and often I am amazed when I see poorly dressed persons give money to beggars and street performers.

Direct taxation, what in England and America is known as income tax or personal tax, is a comparatively new method of raising money in France; therefore the struggle to avoid payment still exists, but not among the poorer classes in the cities. In the country villages the fight

against taxation is bitter, and for generations there has not been a Government in France strong enough or willing enough to make the peasant pay; but the town dweller has to pay, and in many cases he is sore because he knows that if the peasant paid more he would pay less. That accounts for the strife in France between the town and the country. The peasant despises the townsman and calls him a spendthrift. The townsman calls the peasant a profiteer, and it may be recorded that in many cases there is something to be said in favor of the correct appellation of the peasant.

When there was a free market for French vegetables in Great Britain the story they used to tell to account for the high prices in the city markets was that the vegetables were all sent to England; the same tale was told to account for the expensiveness of chickens and turkeys at Christmas. Then when England taxed French farm produce, prices in France did not fall, although the market was for a short time glutted. Then the peasant, to keep prices up, began to throw vegetables into the rivers. There has been no recorded case of anybody being punished for these wanton acts. Perhaps it would be difficult to punish anybody, because the peasant does not understand. He lives for himself alone, he cares not one jot for anybody else. He wants to save money and to buy more land and to exploit that land and to save more money. The money is stored away buried in the garden, beneath the kitchen hearth; the term *lisle* stocking includes the other hiding places, but there is one place the money never goes, and that is into a bank.

Even today, after many years of the existence in France of bank checks, it is extremely difficult, even in Paris, to make a payment by check. If you send a check through the post, the firm to whom it is sent will not merely ac-

knowledge receipt of the check, but will acknowledge receipt of a check dated such and such a date, drawn on such and such a bank, and will even tell you what in all probability you did not know: the serial number of the check you sent.

If a bank returns a check, that is a most serious offense, punishable with imprisonment—"the giving of a check without provision"; the onus is on the drawer, he cannot say he believed another check was being paid in to meet the one he had drawn; that is not accepted as an excuse.

In villages money passes from hand to hand; if you buy a loaf of bread or a couple of cows, it is all the same, cash is paid over. Checks and banks are distrusted, but, curiously enough, outside of the United States, it is doubtful whether there exists a people as financially naïve as the French. There are unquestionably more bank frauds, or to put it another way, more fraudulent bankers in France than elsewhere. Since the late financial depression, there have been fewer recorded cases, but in normal times the newspapers were constantly writing of some banker who had "raised his foot," as they say, and vanished, leaving the till empty. In English we say to take French leave; in France they say to run out like the English, there being a legend that the English have a habit of not staying to say good-by.

Both British and American financial geniuses have been guilty of foisting what I may term gold bricks on the unsuspecting French peasant. The French call these stocks "wet feet." They consist of beautifully engraved stock script in some mine with a fancy name a long way away. Many a French home in the country has parted with good francs to some share-pusher who has come calling. The very people who are so scared of banks and checks part readily enough with their money to a smooth talker who promises high dividends at some future time.

XIII

FRENCH SPOKEN; GERMAN UNDERSTOOD

UNTIL the next clash of Franco-German arms, until the next tide of invasion has rolled across the grain-fields of northern France—for nobody will credit, I trust, a French invasion of Germany—the Miracle of the Marne will continue to be recounted. I who was present at it, all by accident, a humble prisoner of the British 4th Division, first about to die at dawn, and then later to be kept in the Cherche Midi Prison “for the duration,” can never explain it, and so will not try. “For this relief, much thanks” you may exclaim, but be not hasty. You and I are not going to motor all the way to Alsace without exchanging a word or so about the Miracle, so you may as well prepare to bear it.

So much nonsense has been written and talked about the “taxicab army” that one fears to be shooed away like one who tries to tell a small child not to believe in fairy tales; but, *entre nous*, that Taxicab Army was largely a fairy tale. True enough that General Gallieni did mobilize a few cabs and send troops in them to Meaux; but the brilliant story of an army in Paris taxis suddenly being hurled at Von Kluck’s flank is mostly myth.

As we roll past the brown earth now with a slight veneer of green, heralding the annual miracle, far greater than the Miracle of the Marne, we realize what a wonderful terrain for battle the Marne plain is; but even a non-strategist can gather that it is a better terrain for attack than for defense. When the Battle of the Marne was

fought we were still in the stages of open warfare; armies did not dig themselves in, never thought of it. Von Kluck's Army had come into France at breakneck speed, and it was spent. Joffre took a risk; if he lost, Paris was doomed; with a mere handful of tired British troops the French General threw in soldiers who were most certainly not the flower of the French Army, but they were good enough to turn the tide of battle against the overspeeded Germans, and Paris was saved, although, to tell you the strict truth, Paris, thanks to the Press Censorship, never even knew it was threatened—not badly threatened. There are millions of Parisians today who would stare at you in amazement were you to tell them that the Germans were actually encamped fewer than twenty miles from Paris.

These thoughts rather naturally come to one as we travel eastward toward Alsace, across the pleasant rolling plain which one day may be fought over once again. If this dreadful day comes, may there be another Joffre and may the luck hold true again!

Further east, as we shall find, the peasants live on the edge of dread; they are too close to the Rhine, the German Rhine, to feel safe. Attack was expected in 1914 from the east, but it came from the west after Belgium had been trampled over; the east did not suffer badly until the first winter of the war. The east was fortified, ready for war, but the Marne! Never a thought of invasion, never a thought. It was the famous bolt from the blue, that is just what it was.

Look at this country as we pass. Epinay was bottling its champagne; it was rather a good year. The peasants of Meaux were reaping the harvest; it was a very hot summer and a bumper harvest. Why, I remember just over there a shell knocking off the top of the village steeple and sending the débris hurtling into that field

where a man was reaping; he looked at the flying dust in surprise—and then he went on reaping. I saw a middle-aged Frenchman placidly fishing that fine September afternoon right next to the ruins of a bridge the British Engineers had just blown sky-high.

A bolt from the blue. Verily. A bolt shot out of a blue sky, holding up a golden sun shining down upon golden corn. Aeroplanes were not yet very dangerous; they dropped bombs around here, but the bombs were no bigger than hand grenades; in those early autumn days of 1914 there were no hand grenades. Why, we even *liked* the Germans. I had a fellow prisoner, a young German, and I bought his belt, bought it, mind you, for a franc, but they were gold francs in those days, a franc was worth ninepence halfpenny or nineteen cents. It was a funny war—then.

Everything has been rebuilt. Many churches and schools look very new, indeed, you will notice; they have not been standing very long. The peasant shakes his head. He wonders if it were worth putting them up, if they are all to be so soon knocked down again?

I am not pessimistic myself, not very. It is the mood of the peasant. Tonight, if you like, we will make our quarters in a small village, where they seldom even see an Englishman or an American, and we will find out for ourselves what they are thinking, because if the bell in the church tower tolls again, and the town crier has to beat his drum, it can have but one meaning. Those *sales Boches* are at it again. In 1914 they called it the shadow of the mailed fist across the fields of France, but the fields of the Marne were unshadowed. Now it is not the same. They feel the shadow on their own little plots of land.

England is a small country, and what happens in London interests the whole British Isles. What happens in

New York is not of first-rate interest to those living in the South or the West. France, according to European standards, is a big country, and what happens in Paris only interests the Parisians, unless it be politics, and then it interests everybody, for every Frenchman is an individual politician. If you travel in a third-class railway carriage in France you will as often as not listen to first-class conversation, and although the Frenchman reads every word that is printed, he likes to think things out for himself. That is because a Frenchman is naturally educated to think.

We can stay for the night in any place you like, in the big military town of Chalons-sur-Marne, or in some small village; a village will perhaps interest you more, because you will feel that you are nearer to the heart of France, and you will be right.

Let us just walk without taking heed of our direction; there is singing here; let us go in and find out what it is all about. The little café is very small, a little oblong room, with about seven brown wood tables in a line. Dark red imitation leather benches against the wall, below a long mirror. On the right a small zinc-topped bar, and bottles on shelves placed in front of a mirror. Sawdust on the floor, but everything very neat and clean.

There are about twenty-five people present, including a small sleepy-eyed boy. There are drinks in front of each person seated round the tables, and at the end table there is a big vase of flowers. Behind the zinc bar is a rather pretty girl of about sixteen. She smiles and wishes us good evening. A very fat woman in a white blouse is standing up singing, without any accompaniment. She interrupts her song for an instant, nods and smiles to us, and continues her song. The pretty girl behind the bar says confidentially that it is Maman's birthday. With nods she

points out the rest of the family. "That's Papa sitting next to Maman, that's my sister, just going to sing now; that's my uncle behind you; isn't he like Maman? My fiancé is coming later; he is a Breton, a sailor." In ten minutes we have lived a year. We know the family. We ask permission to drink to Maman and wish her many happy years. She smiles and asks us to sit in with the family and old friends.

A postman off duty, but still in uniform. A couple of tramway conductors with their rolls of tickets and clippers. Two motor mechanics in blue overalls and grease stains. We shake hands and are offered drinks. We buy beer at a penny a glass. An hour ago we were foreigners, now we are members of a big family. And the songs go round and round; those who cannot or will not sing, tell stories, and the stories are funny, and they are not what we call smoking-room stories. Nobody has too much to drink, everybody is happy.

We go back to the zinc bar. It is known, of course, that although we speak French we are foreigners. English or American? The men come over to talk. What do they think in London or New York about the Socialist victory in France? They listen attentively and make sage comment. The door opens and out of the night comes François, the sailor fiancé from Brittany. We are introduced and shake hands, and François, a dark and handsome young man, clinks glasses with us.

It is a dark and stormy night and the rain lashes the windows of this snug little café. Inside it is cozy. The singing continues, so does the conversation. And then François, as becomes a sailor and a man of action, brings in a note of jarring realism: when are we going to have war?

You cannot escape it, the peasant in the field, the worker

in the factory, the postman off duty, and the sailor on week-end leave. They are so near to it, so close to the lurking devil who has no expanse of water to cross to bring death and destruction pouring down, even as the rain is pouring down tonight. Far away in the South they may not fear war; in the U.S.A., three thousand miles away, war is something to read about in a newspaper or to look at on a screen. In England it is a shade closer, but there is the sea, and there is no conscription; for the first few weeks of war, at any rate, a man will have a breathing space to make up his mind if he wishes to fight or not; but in France!

The tolling of the bell, the beating of the drum, and away you go. Working clothes tonight and a uniform in the morning. "Theirs not to reason why." The thought of it hangs over France, and nowhere is the thought more pregnant with dread than in the East, the country through which we are now traveling. Today big empty plains of ploughed fields. Soon, perhaps, trenches and the stench of dead horses and fields of wooden crosses.

Let us move on toward Lorraine and Alsace, passing through Bar-le-Duc and Nancy, and the garrison towns which will once again have to bear the brunt of the first onslaught.

Here is Verdun, city of heroic memory, once reduced to dust and now entirely rebuilt, and except for its war memorials and its monuments, showing no trace whatsoever of its suffering. The roads are long and straight, the tall slim poplar trees lining the thoroughfares like sentinels. We meet very little traffic, and as usual in the French countryside, we see few people. Even the villages appear deserted, and it is rare even to see many people working in the neatly-kept fields. One wonders where the people are or when they work on the land, but if we

should be traveling through the villages before dawn, we should see lights in the windows of the cottages, for men and women are rising to drink a bowl of black coffee, to eat a chunk of dry bread, and then to go out as day breaks to work in the fields. The men will take their midday dinner with them and a liter of red wine, and they will come back at dusk to eat soup and drink more wine and eat masses and masses of bread.

But when we enter the reconquered territory of Alsace, it is a different world. The Frenchmen will tell you that Alsace is French and the Germans will tell you that it is German, and the Alsatians will tell you that it is Alsace, so you can take your choice. They speak French now and they understand German, and they used to speak German and understand French. The French peasant is a vastly different person compared with the Alsatian. The long years of German domination have left their mark, and even if Alsace stays French, it will take years to eradicate the German influence. Food and drink make the man. The English and the Scotch and the Irish are what they are for the beer and the tea and the whisky they drink, and the beef and the fish they eat. The Latin is what he is for the wine he drinks, and the more agile mind of the Latin is due in some considerable measure to the lightness of his diet. When the Alsatian peasant rises before the sun to go and work in the fields, he does not drink the black coffee of his—now—French brothers. He has a little glass of burning spirits, schnapps, then off he goes. Later they will bring him breakfast, coffee and milk and bread and sausage. He will have a bottle of wine with him. At midday, when the Alsatian straightens his back for a rest, they bring him food, hot food, meat and vegetables and plenty of it. A contrast indeed to the truly

French peasant who lives on bread and wine and coffee, and meat, *pot-au-feu* usually, on Sundays.

The French national dish exists, with variations, throughout Europe. But the "pot to the fire"—heaven alone knows the origin of this curious name—is the base of all the chief European national dishes, Italian, German, or Spanish. The *pot-au-feu* is a piece of beef boiled with carrots and turnips, leeks in moderation, an onion or two, and a few cloves for flavor's sake. The soup is strained and drunk, and then the meat is served with the vegetables. The meal is cheap, wholesome and tasty, and it is to be found in every home in France at least once a week. Henri IV uttered the pious wish that he might see a chicken in the pot in every French household every Saturday night. Now and again, in scattered out-of-the-way places, one finds a small eating place advertising modestly that there will be *poule au pot* every Saturday night, but the custom is dying out; chickens are too dear; however, the chicken, when it is cooked "to the King's taste," is served exactly the same way as the aforementioned piece of beef. The *pot-au-feu* is very cheap, even in these days of high prices, and I have never been able to understand why it has not been popularized in England and America, if only as a welcome change from mutton and beef, boiled in the English style. The best lesson I ever had in self-restraint was when I saw a Frenchman in a British household served with cold boiled mutton. He said he had never tasted anything like it. No doubt he was telling the truth.

What the German table lacks in delicacy it makes up in quantity, and this one finds in Alsace. There is very good eating indeed, and good drinking, too, if one becomes accustomed to the white wines with a sharp tang to them.

It is a long way we have traveled since we left the

Pyrenees, when perhaps you will remember I introduced you to hot goose liver with a Madeira sauce. Here in Alsace goose livers are literally mass-produced, but not to be eaten hot; they are mashed into the famous patty of fatted goose liver and exported all over the world. When summer comes the factories either close or go on half time, but when there is a nip in the air Mister Goose knows that his presence is requested, and work becomes intensified. The progress of mankind brought about hand-turned machines to make a goose eat more than he desires, but the peasants who cannot afford to buy a machine feed their geese entirely by hand. The goose is forced to eat quantities of maize, and then he is put into a small coop, which allows him to move about, but not to walk far enough to grow slim.

Motoring and walking about France, you will have noticed gradual changes of landscape; the mountains that vanish and give place to wide plains, then the low wooded hills; the roads that go up and up until they disappear into a forest that to the naked eye seems no bigger than a large clump of trees; but in Alsace the change is so sudden that one realizes the drama of it. Brittany was not French and Normandy was not French, but the transition was so gradual that the eye did not grasp a change; there are always the same squat stone houses, and no visible, knowledgeable change of location except that denoted by the difference in the bonnets the women wear. The large halo-like lace headdress of the Boulogne women, for instance, or the tiny little lace box-like effect of the Normandy women. But here in Alsace the great change is not alone marked by the enormous headdress the Alsatian women wear on Sundays and holidays. The houses are different, the slim spires of the churches remind of South Germany or Bavaria, the cities are not walled, as many

of the ancient ones in France are; but the villages, even the small ones, are walled and often moated, and there are great gateways with a tower above them, reminding that once upon a time, long before Alsace was either German or French, it was simply Alsace, and very feudal, when the castle on the hill was the only allegiance the Alsatians knew.

When old Georges Clemenceau went to Strasbourg a few days after the Armistice was signed, he alighted from a motor car in the middle of the big Place and the Alsatians milled around him, cheering like mad. The "Tiger" beamed. "The Plebiscite has already been held," he exclaimed. This was a cryptic reference to the German demand that the Alsatians should themselves decide whether they would be French or German; the voices of the Alsatians who just wanted to be Alsatians and nothing else, to be autonomous, were muffled by the shouting of the part of the Alsatian populace which welcomed the coming of the French because, quite frankly, it meant an end of the war, and also it meant food.

During the war there was much propaganda in France and in Allied countries. An Alsatian cartoonist named Hansi did brilliant work. The ultimate aim was to prove to the world that Alsace desired nothing better than to be French again. Ever since the war of 1870 the statue of Alsace, in the corner of the Place de la Concorde, in Paris, had a black sash on it. As soon as France went to war, the newspapers concentrated on Alsace; that meant revenge, that meant a target at which to aim. Alsace and victory were indivisible. As the arena of warfare extended, the question of Alsace was largely forgotten and it required the pencil of a Hansi to keep it, if not to fix it, in the French public mind. It would have been difficult, when the Germans were beaten, to make peace without

returning Alsace to France. President Wilson either understood that himself, or else it must have been made known to him in a forcible manner, because, in his Fourteen Points, the President said that the wrong done to France in 1870 must be righted. There was no specific mention of Alsace, but none thought that the President meant anything else but the return of the lost province. And so it came about, and the Alsatians became French once more. Do they like it?

The answer is very difficult and very delicate. Alsace had been German for nearly fifty years. Young males had been soldiers in the German Army, not doing their conscripted service in Alsace, but being sent to garrisons far away in the interior of Germany. The Germans had brought the Alsatians a large measure of material comfort; the villages were better drained, even small farms had electric light. The Germans gave the Alsatians everything but freedom, but in truth they had about as much freedom as the Germans themselves had under the Emperor, and although we thought that not much, it was liberty itself compared with the "freedom" there is in Germany today. The Alsatians, therefore, should be glad they are French, glad to be able to be allowed to speak French, which the Germans did not allow them to do. The coming of Hitler and all that he meant has served the French cause in Alsace, of that there can be no doubt; but until the German Dictator showed what oppression could mean, and before the first refugees from Germany, Catholics as well as Jews, came pouring across the Kehl bridge into Strasbourg, Alsace was just beginning to be a little tired of being French. The honeymoon period was over, life had settled down into stern reality.

Now, taxes have increased in Alsace as they have increased everywhere else in France, and in other countries,

too, but the Alsatian, just like anybody else, does not care a hoot who besides himself is paying more in taxation; he just remembers that it is only since Alsace became French that it costs more to live. That standard of judgment is obviously perfectly unfair, but there it is; that is how the average Alsatian sees the present situation, and that is how he will answer if you ask him whether he likes being a citizen of France.

Then, again, there is the question of the army. When there was an Emperor there were several garrison towns in Alsace. Strasbourg itself had a very big garrison, and so did Colmar, and other towns as well had their quota of German officers and soldiers. The pre-war German officer was a man of substance and means; he brought money with him and he spent it in Alsace; it was all very well to say that Alsace was under the heel of the Germans, but above that heel were trousers in which there were pockets full of money, and the Alsatian of high or low degree likes money just as much as the rest of us. The Germans brought the money, and that was good enough.

Now the French officer has no money, so he cannot spend it. There is still a big garrison in Alsace, a French garrison, of course, but times have changed, and the Alsations realize the change, but do not like it. The saber-rattling German officer may have been a nuisance, but you could always laugh at him behind the closed shutters at night, and his money was good enough. The German soldier was a coarse brute, but he drank beer and schnapps and he seemed well provided with money.

The barracks, the German barracks, were not first-class hotels, but the men were well looked after. The Alsatian conscripts who have to serve in French barracks tell their fathers about them, and they compare notes, and it is un-

derstood that the old-time German barracks were better than the present French barracks.

The French officer, neatly turned out, does not rattle his sword; he does not sweep civilians off the sidewalk as his German opposite number used to do. He is a nice kind person, but he has no money, and that is very tragic . . . for the Alsatians.

All this may sound very petty, but it is true, and my reasons are the real reasons why the Alsatian-French honeymoon came to an end. Then came Hitler, and the Alsatian scene changed. So long as the Rhine was unoccupied by German soldiers, the Alsatians felt reasonably safe from harm. The French had plenty of troops garrisoned in Alsace, and there were many more in the long line of forts defending the eastern frontiers of France. The German frontier was just across the Rhine, almost a stone's-throw from Strasbourg, that truly Alsatian city, with the graceful spires, the beautiful cathedral, the timbered houses, the wide shady tree-lined avenues; all this was Alsatian and French. Why, French is the official language, although you can go into a shop and speak German and they will readily understand you; or you can go into a village and talk Alsatian *patois*, which is blood brother to German; but still the Germans were not there, not even a shadow or anything worse than a commercial traveler with his samples, and even he had the tact to address the shopkeepers in French.

The honeymoon was over, and people were inclined to criticize the French régime, and few realized how times had changed because during the fifty years of German occupation they would have liked quite often to criticize the German régime, but they did not dare. You never knew who might denounce you. But the French gave the Alsatians a very generous helping of liberty.

Then one fine morning German aeroplanes threw their grim shadows over the smoothly-flowing Rhine; there was the loud rattle of tanks over cobblestones, and here, goose-stepping into the Rhineland, came the soldiers in field-gray tunics, the men of Hitler, men who took up positions overlooking Strasbourg and the green fields and purple hills that lay behind the old town. Watching the Rhine.

The Rhineland is now once again tight in the German grip. It is German territory; none can say the Germans did wrong; they merely turned another treaty into a scrap of paper. In armchairs far away we can discuss the rights and the wrongs of the Treaty of Versailles, and heaven knows there were enough wrongs. We can guess whether there will be war or not, and if there is war we can fix a year . . . in our minds. That is a favorite pastime in many New York newspaper offices; but then, neither the editors nor ourselves live on the French side of the Rhine, beneath the shadow of a very mailed fist.

When Hitler marched in, the peasants near the frontier, on the French side of it, began to pack up their belongings; they thought war had come; they were sure of it. They were wrong, perfectly wrong, that time. But what is going to happen to them? They much resemble the peasants I have seen who live close to the slopes of Mount Etna. There is always smoke coming out of the cone, and sometimes the smoke is thicker, and then the peasants get ready, and sometimes, every few years or so, there is a rumble, and lava begins to pour down the slopes, and the peasants run away.

The Rhineland is the Alsatian volcanic cone. The peasants have to watch it, listening, ears to the ground for the far-off rumble which may give warning of the approach of the hordes of the Hun. Not a very pleasant thought, but even unpleasant thoughts must be faced.

When we swing south from Strasbourg tomorrow morning, when we pass through the vineyards of Turkheim, where they grow the grapes that give you delicious Riesling and Tramier, or when we enter Colmar and you recall the aroma of the Tokay I gave you at lunch, you will, if you look close enough, see the dread behind the eyes of the peaceful peasantry who want neither war nor glory.

The storks settle on the sloping roofs; there is a calmness and peace about Alsace that will long linger in your memory. God grant that this peace may endure.

XIV

LA CÔTE D'OR

WE leave the Rhine, meandering slowly through charming valleys, skirting tiny villages, and passing through towns with smoking chimneys, for Alsace by no means exists entirely on its vineyards and its geese. That is the picturesque side of the regained territory, and side by side with these two industries of the stomach there are textile factories and motor-car works, and steel-rolling mills; that, after all, is what France really won when her soldiers swept the Germans back across the Rhine.

The foliage is luxurious, there are the white flowers of the tobacco plant, there are big fields of potatoes and wheat and barley and oats, and between us and the purple hills are the slim chimneys belching black smoke. A great and prosperous land, if only it could be sure that the tide of war will not once again engulf it.

Once more we are approaching the country of good wine; in France it is indeed difficult to be long away from it. We are coming now to the *Côte d'Or*, Dijon, world-famed city of good cheer and mustard. When we leave we shall make for Aix-les-Bains, not to take the waters, but to watch those who do. Here there once occurred to me a comic interlude with a helpful policeman who would that I ate at his favorite restaurant. I shall for no particular reason show you Mâcon, noisy city of southern part of the Côte d'Or, and then we shall go to Lyons, which tries to imitate Paris, and then to Grenoble and so to Provence.

At Bar-sur-Aube we again come across our friends the

fishermen, that noble band of super-optimists whose pastime must for ever defeat those who affirm that the French are an excitable people. Would I had time to discourse at greater length on this subject. The French fisherman is a fisherman apart from any other. An American just takes a day off and goes fishing; an Englishman only fishes if he can afford it, and it is a reasonably expensive hobby. It means hiring what they call a piece of water, it means the purchase of much complicated tackle; but I can, as a non-fisherman, imagine the thrill of killing a salmon, although I cannot for the life of me understand the altogether altruistic satisfaction of capturing a fish which has no culinary pendant. My soul does not yearn for the joy of getting thoroughly wet in order to pull an inoffensive fish from its natural element, and then either throwing it back or allowing it to expire on the river bank. But the French fisherman does not even take a large jar of beer with him when he goes fishing. He does not take a day off, he appears likely enough to have decided to give over the remainder of his life. True, the French fisherman will have some food with him, and the inevitable bottle of wine, but I have yet to see the *auberge* of the Anglers' Inn type, where a promise of cold roast beef, underdone and carved thin, pickled walnuts, cherry pie and thick cream, and a tankard of ale, allows some compensation for the rigors of fishing in England.

The French fisherman, of the type at Bar-sur-Aube, just dips his line in a stream and does not even seem to hope for a bite. The pale blue sky flecked with tiny white clouds, the green willows, the darting birds, the placidly flowing river Aube, what do they mean? Just nothing at all, not more than that well-known primrose by the river's brim, ". . . a yellow primrose was to him, and it was nothing more." Although what more a yellow primrose

could be than a yellow primrose, I have never been able to discover.

The French fisherman watching his float bobbing about sees neither sky, willows, nor darting birds. Possibly he is thinking of the Cabinet crisis in Paris, or the game of *belotte* he is going to play with his cronies in the café to-night. There are no means of telling. Maybe he is worrying about the fish he never catches, one simply does not know. Sometimes I think I catch a hint of a brain that rises above the merely optimistic dropping of a hook in the river. Now and again I see a man closely watching not one, but two or three lines. I compare him to the ambitious shopkeeper who opens branch establishments.

An old friend of mine was Aristide Briand, who was ten or twelve times Prime Minister of France. He was a fisherman, he used not to catch trout. Once when I was lunching with him and asked if the fish were rising (he had a small property in Normandy) his eyes twinkled and he said he was what he called a "concierge fisherman." Perhaps this needs explanation.

The concierge, or caretaker, of a French block of flats sleeps with a bell very near the bed. When you go home after the concierge has gone to bed, you ring, and the concierge, in his or her sleep, reaches out an arm and touches a cord which releases a pneumatic spring which opens the door to you. Likewise, when you have been visiting and the house door is closed, when the concierge has retired for the night, you stand outside the glass door of the concierge's lodge and you shout: "*Cordon, s'il vous plait,*" and again the pneumatic spring is released. Briand, so he said, had a tiny bell fixed to his float, so that if and when he had a bite, the fish would ring for its own demise.

Tickling for trout, a sport not unknown in my own country, is unknown in France. But trout are most un-

doubtedly caught in the Aube and other rivers, and they are fished for in legitimate manner. Once I happened to notice a short paragraph in a Lyons newspaper saying that the same evening there would be a meeting of the Friends of the Trout. For the moment I had visions of a sort of piscatorial friendly society, an association for the protection of the succulent fish which, cooked either in a pan "*au beurre*," or *au bleu*, provides an interesting *entrée*. I was, however, wrong, but that was mostly due to the incorrect nomenclature of the society, which, when it called itself friendly disposed toward trout, was prevaricating. *Les Amis de la Truite* are, for they still exist, an association of fishermen, not at all of friendly disposition to either the speckled or slate-colored variety of the trout family. They, the members, spend days angling in the Rhône or any of the innumerable streams and brooks around Lyons.

Let us leave the sleepy little town of Bar-sur-Aube (and incidentally *bar* in French is not the name of a place in which you drink, but of a fish) and continue our way to Dijon. When you are rolling Rivierawards in the Blue Train you pass Dijon at night; it is a mere name in white on a blue signboard. You awake far in the Riviera sun and you have not had a glimpse of the great town which sprawls like a giant between Switzerland and Paris, as well as dominating the route south.

All the world knows that Dijon is famous for its mustard; how many know that it is of almost equal fame as a manufacturer of what the French call *cassis*, that purple sirup which is made of the juice of black currants? But Dijon has other claims to fame; it has a University, it is a famed center of learning and culture; it has a big garrison; and its restaurants are legendary.

We ride into Dijon along a wide avenue lined with tall trees, and we can well imagine the importance of the city

through the ages, when the coaches came galloping through and the steaming horses were taken from between the shafts, and the coach and tired horses taken into the big paved yards we see beneath the stone archways of the inns. The passengers would stretch their cramped limbs and make for the inn and the food and wine they knew awaited them. They would eat and drink and sleepily stumble toward the little glass window—it is still there—and then they would be handed their brass candlesticks, and the candles would be lit for them, and they would climb up to bed. The stairs are still there, and it is easy to see that the installation of the lift did not take place so very many years ago. Many things about Dijon are archaic, except the prices; they move with the times.

Café life in Dijon is just as it was far back in the olden days before there were cinemas and when the only amusement was that offered by the cafés of the provincial cities. Let us go into this big café. It is at least fifty feet from floor to ceiling, and the big square *salle* is like a mansion. You may notice how the various sections of Dijon society segregate themselves. Many people are dining. Let us examine them first. They may be subdivided: There are undoubted commercial travelers, who are just passing through, like ourselves. There are others who are eating their evening meals; they are well-to-do bachelors and widowers; I know they must be fairly well off, because this is the best café in the city. If they were married men they would be eating at home. Tonight is neither Saturday, Sunday, nor public holiday, and that is the only moment when a French *bourgeois* eats in a restaurant. Men do not come here with their mistresses because it is too essentially a public place.

The party of four who have come in and ordered coffee and for whom the waiter is bringing a square of green

baize and a pack of cards are local shopkeepers. They assemble here every night for their game of *belotte*, every night except Sunday; that night they spend at home or in a cinema; a cinema is the concession, the only one, made to modernity. These four men have been playing nightly for years—only the War broke the sequence; the men call each other by their Christian names, they are all very friendly and jolly together. It is quite likely that they know one another's incomes, they know each other's wives slightly, but they have never been in each other's homes. France is like that. That stupid statement that an Englishman's home is his castle is without any sense. An Englishman or an American keeps open house, but a Frenchman's home is his moated castle, with the draw-bridge always up.

The party of young people, jolly and rather noisy, are students, and so are the young men scattered around; they are deep in learned books, even at night, and they pay little attention either to the orchestra which is playing in the gallery or to the pretty ladies who, like evening butterflies, flutter in and seat themselves at the tables near the windows looking on to the busy tram-ridden street.

The party in black, young man, young woman, and elderly woman, who are talking quietly over by the wall, are strangers to Dijon. They have come to collect a *heritage*, although I confess I cannot place the elderly woman, but conclude that she is the mother either of the husband or of the young wife, and she has come, in decent black, to see that her offspring secures her or his rights.

Outside, sitting on the terrace near to the pretty ladies, but not, oh, very distinctly not of them, are the momentarily unattached ladies. These are the *dames de garri-son*, the French equivalent of what they used to call in England in pre-war days (and now still, for aught I

know) "garrison hacks." I personally prefer the French expression, it is so much more *gentil*. *Ces dames* are the brides' understudies for the young officers garrisoned in Dijon. When the officers leave the regimental *popotte*, as the Mess is called in Army language, they make for the *rendez-vous* fixed with the lights o' love who are now awaiting them in the café. It is a regular and recognized habit. When the regiment moves, the lady remains; sometimes, but rarely, she moves, too. But there is always another regiment.

Let us now continue our journey to Morez, so close to the Swiss frontier that you could almost shoot an arrow into Tell's country. Archery has fallen into disuse, but in these tiny valleys so adjacent to Switzerland they have other hobbies which come from over the border. The young men get together of a spring or summer evening and crack whips. I am quite aware that this statement sounds perfectly crazy, but I will repeat it: they crack whips.

Whip-cracking is one of the better-known outdoor sports in rural Switzerland. It excels yodeling, and what is more natural than practising it on the French side of the frontier? The crack of a whip echoes sharply through the valley, and the villagers can talk to one another by whip-cracking from valley to valley just as some native villages in savage Africa talk to one another with drums. But you will find this strange survival of an ancient custom only in places somewhat remote from main roads or railway lines.

The country is hilly and the curves in the road are sharp enough to make us keep our eyes well open, although there is very little traffic, because we are not proceeding along a main road. In many countries we should now be keeping our eyes open for something else. It is

lunch time, and we should be hoping to meet an eating place where we could be sure to find food worth the eating. Will you be my guest for lunch? I will warrant you that at the very next place we reach we shall eat well enough, although by no means luxuriously.

Here we are, then, just past Morez, this little one-story shack by the roadside. That lorry and the dirty old motor car and the couple of horse carts suggest that there is food going on inside. Maybe we can sit on this little stone terrace outside, but first let us go inside and find out if they are serving food.

Good morning, Madame, have you anything to eat for two hungry men? Nothing? What a pity! An omelette, perhaps? Ah, thank you, Madame! *And* a salad, a thousand thanks! We will have it on the terrace, if you please, and a bottle of beer at once.

The little old lady crosses the road to her garden and picks a salad, and hobbles back, while we sip our beer. The beer is delightfully cold, although there is no ice; it comes to us direct from a cool cellar dug deep in the rocks. Meanwhile the old lady breaks eggs, two apiece, and makes us an excellent *omelette aux fines herbes*; we have the salad served at the same time on a different plate, a concession to our foreign tastes. You notice a peculiar but nice taste in the salad dressing? Even in this out-of-the-way auberge in the hills they have ideas *in re* cooking, as the lawyers would say. We taste again slowly, allowing the full savor of the dressing to linger on the tongue. Yes, there is something different. We rap on the window behind us and ask details of the dressing, but the little old lady is coy, and the secret of the salad dressing of Morez remains locked in the hills. When the *patronne* opened the door there was a very pleasant odor of stew. "We thought, Madame," we say, "you had nothing but

omelette to offer?" She jerks her head backwards to the kitchen. That, she says, is our lunch, but if these gentlemen would like . . . The gentlemen do like, do like the stew of veal very much indeed, and they order another bottle of beer, and then they eat of a Camembert cheese that is as creamy, but no more than a Camembert should be. Coffee and what the French call the bad quarter of an hour; but the bill is not really bad; a few francs settle it, and we are off again for Annecy.

Rich as France is in rivers, there is a lack of lakes, and Lake Annecy is one of the best known. It is large and blowy, and lacks principally the charm of the Swiss lakes just a few miles away. It would be somewhat difficult to say just how Annecy lacks charm, but it is too close-fitting, if I can so express myself; one has a feeling of being shut in, and there are mosquitoes, and the waters of the lake do not lack odor, so we will away to Bourg-en-Bresse.

I am already aware that this chapter contains a considerable amount of food and drink. I am aware of it, and I am mortified, as Jimmy Durante says, but we are traveling through the Côte d'Or, the part of France which abounds in good cheer, and may I as an earnest student of the origin of international expressions suggest to you that the expression "*good cheer*" means nothing at all? But in French they say "*bonne chaire*," which means exactly the same thing as good cheer, *chaire* meaning flesh or food. How *bonne* became *good*, I really do not know.

Bresse is the famous home of the chickens, just as Strasbourg is the center for goose liver; but all is not Bresse that figures on the menus as *poulet de Bresse*; it has become a trade term like Brussels sprouts; when the chickens have truly come from the neighborhood of Bresse they are very fine indeed. The secret, I think, is not in the particular breed of chicken, but in the feeding. It pro-

duces a firm, white flesh and an excellent flavor, and the chicken merchants of Bresse wax as fat as their chickens.

Although Bresse excels for its chickens, Bourg-en-Bresse is the Mecca of epicures and gourmets from all over the country. There is a hotel which is renowned for its cooking, but there is no need at all for us to eat at such an expensive place. There are many restaurants which are equally good and where the prices are extremely moderate. Were I a troubadour of the olden times I think that instead of writing a sonnet to a lady's eyebrows, I would pen a poem to the creamed chicken of Bresse; indeed, nowadays both the lady's eyebrows and the chickens are plucked, but the whole menu of a Bourg-en-Bresse meal is a poem. In many parts of France the art of eating is practised by artists; in Bourg-en-Bresse it is ordained by masters.

Already in this work have I had occasion to remark how curious it is that wherever we find good eating-places, by which I mean towns renowned for the excellence of the cooking, we are sure to find not far away the antidote. Aix-les-Bains is the antidote to Bourg-en-Bresse. Let us go there.

Aix-les-Bains is delightfully Edwardian, with just a mere *souçon* of Victorianism. I, who have merely known Aix since the War, which turned a new chapter, can readily visualize it as it must have been when King Edward VII used to go to take the waters at Continental spas, mostly, it is true, in Austria.

Aix would make a background for another Noel Coward *Bitter Sweet*. The band in the shady garden would be playing a slow valse, just as it does today, and people would be sitting here sipping the waters, as they are doing now, and there would be ladies in bonnets in bath chairs; there would be no smart motor cars, as there are today,

and everything would run smoothly, as it does now, and the *maîtres d'hôtels* would wear *favoris*, though now they are clean shaven, and the men would stop to buy *Gagliani's Messenger* instead of the *Continental Daily Mail*. Aix-les-Bains was made for the favorites of fortune; it is essentially not a place for poor people. The very atmosphere breathes luxury. You may remember that Fannie Hurst, in her great novel *Back Street*, lays some of her strongest and most pathetic scenes in Aix. Miss Hurst contrasts the luxury of the life of the American millionaire with the eventual poverty of the woman who walks the back streets of his life. That is real drama, the contrast of light and shade, and for no particular reason I imagine there is much unknown drama in Aix. Aix-les-Bains, Aches and Pains they used to call it humorously. Let us look at those who come here to take the waters, fortunate we who are merely transients. That old, old man, an extremely wealthy American. Many years ago he was mixed in a big financial scandal and left America for France. He has never been home. His name is prominent wherever international society meets; you meet him on Longchamps racecourse, on the boardwalk at Deauville, here every year at Aix, but he never goes home. He never will go home.

That gay-looking Indian prince, rich as Cræsus, as they say, and like Midas, everything he touches turns to gold, his wealth is fabulous, and he is the only rich man I know who is really happy. He is like a prince of the Arabian Nights; he can wave a wand which means magic. He meets a young French girl in Aix-les-Bains and he marries her, a French Cinderella in real life; she is young, kind and beautiful, and his palaces in India are hers; she has racehorses, houses in Paris and Deauville, motor cars, a

kind husband, and a three-year-old son. Magic in Aix-les-Bains. Aches and pains, but happiness too.

Once upon a time I drove into Aix-les-Bains with friends. It was my first visit, theirs also. It was lunch time and we were hungry, but although there were many visible restaurants belonging to hotels, we sensed there should be something better, better for our stomachs and our pocketbooks. There used to be a song entitled: "If You Want to Know the Time, Ask a Policeman." I asked a *gendarme* on traffic duty to name me a restaurant; if I had seen some empty cabs drawn up outside any restaurant we would have entered, because cabmen always know where the best food may be obtained. Anyhow, I asked the policeman, who kindly pointed down a street with his baton and named a restaurant called Little Red Riding-hood. We went there, but did not care for the appearance, so we continued to drive.

We went up streets and down streets, and we turned and twisted, and then suddenly we found ourselves on the main street and within a few feet of the traffic policeman who had indicated a restaurant. With scornful mien he again directed me, and I went through the motions of going there again, and tried to give an air of looking for some place I was unable to find. This time we actually stopped opposite the restaurant, and I crossed the road to obtain a better look at it. I happened to glance up, and there was my policeman striding towards me as if he were wearing three-league boots. I took a running jump into the car, pressed hard on the accelerator and drove fast away from Aix-les-Bains. I may be a coward, but when it comes to choosing a restaurant I prefer a taxi-driver to a policeman.

XV

FROM THE ALPS TO THE RHÔNE

GRENOBLE, that noble city, stands like an ice maiden, cold, disdainful and beautiful, close to the Swiss frontier, and seems to be so remote from France. Yet the citizens of Grenoble are true sons of France, and sturdy fighters, too, when the need arises. The men are tiny and wiry, very much like white Gurkhas, and they serve in that famous regiment, the *Chasseurs Alpins*, known throughout France in the World War as the "Blue Devils." They wear big blue bérêts, dark blue tunics, and light blue breeches, and they fought, these hardy mountaineers, in the mountains of Alsace, or as much of the mountains as the French could bite into when the Germans held to them so tightly. The white tops of the Alps are so near in vision, but yet far enough away, except when winter comes and we find roads closed to traffic because of the snow. Like a wall of ice the Alps cut off France from Switzerland and Italy, but man with his cunning has tunneled through the mountains and has built roads that circumferene these massive towers that once tried to stop the advance of such mighty soldiers as Napoleon and Hannibal.

Although at peace with Switzerland and on better terms with Italy, France guards her Alpine frontiers with bitter jealousy. There are not the spectacular forts of the iron and concrete "pill-box" type, but hidden away in the mountains are gun emplacements and newly cut military

roads, and there are maneuvers in which the Blue Devils are taught the art of fighting on skis.

The icy remoteness of Grenoble, you will notice as we drive into the city, does not prevent a strict attention to business, chiefly the business of making gloves. I do not know how many millions of pairs are turned out, probably the economic slump has reduced the output, but not so many years ago more than twenty million pairs of gloves were manufactured annually. Moving about the country to look at this Face of France, we listen and learn many things, and here in Grenoble, where they fit the world with gloves, you will learn that French hands are smaller than the British and not so long as the American. But apart from its glove factories, this lovely city of noble streets has another claim to fame: it harbors one of the most famous of French universities, which used to specialize in electrical science.

It is my intention to take you and talk with you all the way from the Alps to the Rhône, by which I mean to the mouth of that river, which incidentally rises not so far from here, in Switzerland. It is passing strange that a country like France, which has so many famous rivers, should have so few which are really and truly French. The Rhône begins across the Alps and flows right across France into the Mediterranean, the Garonne has its origin in Spain, the Oise begins to flow in Belgium. The Loire and the Seine are French from beginning to end, however, but no doubt because of its birth in the mountain cascades of Switzerland, the Rhône carries more water down to the sea than any other river in France. The green ice of the mountains becomes the limpid blue water of the Rhône.

In these twelve months of wandering, when fancy-free we are able to motor, walk, fly or take a train, I would like you to fail to follow the beaten track well blazed for

you in innumerable guide-books, and to add just one more means of locomotion to your means of transport: the magic carpet. Close your eyes, hold tight, and here we come flying down to Mâcon, a somewhat dreary town, *entre nous*, but one which gives its name to a famed wine.

Mâcon lives only for its wine trade and on the motorists who pass through from Paris to the South and back again. It is the river Saône which flows slowly past the ancient city of long tree-bordered quays, where the citizens of Mâcon stroll in the evenings and watch the fireflies darting like fairy torches. It is then that Mâcon seems a city of retirement and calm, not like the disdainful and classic Grenoble, but giving a promise of the warmth Provence will bring, for in my own way I am taking you to La Belle Provence, where they drink their coffee strong and hot, and where they like their meats liberally smeared with garlic. A raw onion, a slice of bread and a bottle of wine are "paradise enow" for most Provençal peasants and workmen. Through Provence we shall move slowly; it will not harm us if we spend the summer there. We will drive along the dusty roads. We will picnic beneath the dark green olive trees; every inch of the rich soil is cultivated, peaches grow among the vines, rosy apricots cling to the sunny walls. Melons are plentiful and cheap in high summer. Luscious figs, deep scarlet inside their purple skins, are to be bought for a few pennies. Life is easy, slow-moving, among these southern sons of the soil.

But not yet; that was merely anticipation; first we will see Mâcon alive and busy in the morning, when the calm has departed, when barges are loaded and are piled high with barrels of wine alongside the tree-bordered quays; when the strollers have turned into busy men and women; the fireflies are no more, and Mâcon hums with the rattle of lorries and trucks make a hideous din.

I do not like Mâcon, I mean the town, but I adore the wine. There are indifferent restaurants, and the hotels are not very nice. I was driving south one springtime and was trying not to sleep in Mâcon. I wished to push on, but night was falling and I did not know of a hotel between Mâcon and the next town. I drove to the outskirts and then decided to return to the town to eat and sleep, but knowing of two hotels which had displeased me on former occasions, I thought a citizen might be able to advise me of something better. Such a citizen, a clean-shaven man who, I will wager a ducat, was or had been a valet, stood and watched me maneuvering my car. He glanced at the GB plate on the back and I stopped the car beside him.

"Do you," I asked in my very best French, "happen to know of a good but not too expensive hotel?" Without batting an eyelid my citizen replied that he did not speak English. In what I trust was the French of La Fontaine, spoken with a cold and bitter accent, I informed the citizen that I, on the other hand, spoke no Chinese. Then drove on till I found one of the worst hotels, even in Mâcon.

Would you care to adventure with me into Lyons, once the second city of France? I warn you that driving with me in Lyons is an almost invariable adventure. I have, as you are aware, battled nobly with trams in Bordeaux, and escaped defeat, but only a man with a super-developed bump of locality can safely steer himself through Lyons without losing himself. I have entered with hope high in my heart and provided with what I trusted was a fool-proof book of words which would help me through Lyons and back on to the open road: I have gone with maps and with people who were prepared to swear that they *knew* Lyons, and that they could direct me with their

eyes shut, but I always managed to lose myself, and them. There is something uncanny about Lyons; I have a sort of idea that they take away streets and move bridges; nothing else would account for the chaos I discovered when attempting to pilot myself through Lyons. And other unfortunate things always happen. I have left a car in perfect condition overnight, and in the morning it would not start; I have made up my mind to return to a hotel at which I have stayed on previous occasions, and after spending many hours finding it again, I have found it closed.

I put my hand on my heart and swear that I carefully study the map and directions. I am told to drive in over La Lune, and I do, and I think I am continuing my journey when I find that I am once again revisiting the glimpses of the Moon. I drive with one eye on the road and another on the plan of the city, but it is no good. I find myself in the middle of Lyons proceeding in the wrong direction on a one-way street, and then I burst into tears and they come and tell me it will be all right, and that once, in the year 1921, a man spent most of the winter driving about Lyons; they saw him grow a beard, and there were rumors that he was a German spy, and it was only when they arrested him and obtained an interpreter that they discovered he was an English tourist who wished to join his wife in Nice.

Then I recover courage and I am told how to cross two bridges, and to turn left and then right, and then left again, and I start off and I go mad, and in a quarter of an hour I am back again going the wrong way on a one-way street, and I pretend that I dropped a glove and came back for it. Finally, when I have determined to seek a decent hotel and go to bed and start off again in the morn-

ing, I find myself on the outskirts of Lyons and heading for the open road. It is all very confusing.

Lyons would like to be like Paris; it cannot call itself a "little Paris," as so many other French cities do, because it is so big; but Lyons does ape Paris, and it is foolish, because although I do not think Lyons has any personality it does not achieve one by trying to resemble the capital.

Lyons, of course, owed its once-upon-a-time prosperity to the silk trade, but that was before the days when every servant girl wanted to have stockings of rayon, and then the United States and Japan came into the picture, and the prosperous days of Lyons were numbered. But Lyons keeps its head up; its tall gaunt houses, so gray and sad-looking, stare down on the two rivers, the Saône and the Rhône, which wind between the banks. Lyons has been called the Manchester of France, and when it comes to trade there is a comparison, but the two cities have not the slightest real resemblance to one another. Manchester is alive, even when it rains, and heaven knows that it rains often enough, but Lyons, although with a lower rainfall, is a sadder place.

But if Manchester and Lyons do not look alike architecturally, there is something, perhaps difficult to search out and pin down, which brings the Mancuians and Lyon-nais into affinity. I think it must be a certain sense of humor common to both peoples. And not sense of humor alone; an inborn touch of the mystical and a love of music and culture. In Lyons there was born the Punch and Judy show, an offspring perhaps of the Italian marionettes, but nevertheless something unique called Chignol, or Guignol, the show one sees in the Champs Élysées in Paris; and this gave rise to the Big or Grand Guignol which has gone round the world, but Guignol is Punch,

and his wife is not Judy, but Madelon, and their friend is Gnafron. It is the knockabout or slapstick humor that one finds in Lancashire. Lyons, again like Manchester, learned through its trade to know the Orient, and it was a Lyons merchant who was drawn to the East to try to learn its secrets, and who gave Paris a museum and named it Guiment, after himself.

But despite the competition from the Far East and from the West, Lyons does not despair because already twice before in its checkered history has the great city been almost ruined. Lyons took the silk industry from Tours, but the revoking of the Edict of Nantes removed the best workers. In the eighteenth century they invented printed calicoes, and then came revolutionary troubles, and the great mercantile city was on the verge of ruin.

But, although I have found a rough outline of resemblance between Lyons and Manchester, I must point out that whereas Manchester can offer nothing but whisky to the traveler, the same expensive whisky one finds anywhere in the country, Lyons has growing quite close at hand an admirable light Beaujolais which, although it does not serve to make the Lyonnais any gayer, is nevertheless very acceptable to the visitor. Lyons is also a very excellent town for a traveling gourmet; one has to discover the restaurants; they are not advertised and renowned, but they are worth the trouble of discovery; and again, Lyons has left its mark on the menu by having given its name to potatoes sliced and fried brown with chopped onion: *pommes lyonnaises*.

Once across the high bar of hill on the south side of Lyons we forget the gray tall houses and the broad rivers, and feel we are on the verge of a really smiling land. It is true; we will go to Montélimar, famed for its nougat, a fame that has spread all over France and even abroad.

Montélimar lives on making nougat and selling it. It does nothing much else, it has no need to do anything else, because until you have tasted the nougat of Montélimar you do not know what nougat is. Lyons makes a sausage, or rather it gives its name to a sausage, but of one species only. Montélimar makes nougat with nuts in it, it makes nougat with preserved fruit, it sells it in paper and it sells it in sticky lumps. You pay your francs and you take your choice. People stop their cars and give names and addresses of friends who want nougat, friends living in lonely places where there is no nougat.' On tables near doors are writing materials, and you inscribe a label with the name of your friend, and the experienced saleswoman takes one look at the country to which you are despatching nougat, and in a flash she tells you the amount of the postage. It is a lady-like business, this selling of nougat. At a conservative estimate there must be forty establishments selling the only genuine Montélimar nougat, so you have a confusing choice, and the women stand at the doors of the shops and look at you reproachfully if you enter any establishment but theirs; but you cannot do anything about it, because nobody could have sufficient friends to send nougat from all the shops in Montélimar, so there is nothing to do but to creep back to our car, pretending not to notice the reproachful glances, the sad droop of the head that once meant a face smiling such a sweet welcome as we drove into Montélimar in quest of nougat. Sadly we drive away, realizing that even in the sweetest moment there is a cup of bitterness waiting to be drunk.

From the home town of nougat we drive to Orange. Please dwell for one moment on that name: Orange. Does it mean something to you? Does it, perchance, call to your mind a barrow-load of yellow lumps lit by naph-

tha light, with a coster bawling aloud on a Saturday night in the Edgware Road? Does it recall your childhood, when you were taken to a pantomime, and from the heights of Olympus the gods scented the auditorium with the perfume of oranges?

Or would you be romantic, Madame, and think of the wreath of orange-blossom on your hair when, on your father's arm, you walked so smilingly down the aisle? Yes, on the whole, I think Romance should have it, for we are going to Orange, the realm of Romance. Alas, France knows not the flaring costermonger barrow, the push-cart of the Bowery, or the hullabaloo of the pantomime, and even the wreath of orange-blossom is a rarity, for so few weddings are celebrated in church. But let us keep to this memory of Romance and drive on toward it.

It is a heavy white road, and about us is the rich smell of pressed grapes; we recognize, too, the smell of newly mown hay, and we listen gratefully to the drip, drip of water. It looks cool enough beneath the green cedar trees, but we do not stop, because there standing out against the sky is a glorious arch of rich apricot, which stands so startlingly in the middle of a wide green space, as if daring us to pass without stopping, looking, and learning.

I would like to live in Orange, a biggish town, for France, of about ten thousand people, if only that I might also be known as *un Orangeois*. Notice, please, the little river Meyne, and that ruined feudal castle on the hill, where now you may remark a statue of the Virgin. Orange looks lost, does it not, in the middle of this great plain, surrounded with nothing but vines and mulberry trees, and dominated by this great arch of apricot. For the moment we cannot see, but later we will see, the old Roman theater, where once a year they give plays, and

then there comes a great crowd which fades away when the play is over, and there is nothing left but a big bowl of silver in the sky, and millions of twinkling diamonds, and a big black arch that this noon was like a ripened apricot.

What history this place has seen! In the fifteenth century there was a university here, but hundreds and hundreds of years before that there was a Roman colony. Then came religious wars which smashed the place to pieces. Then under the Prince of Orange it became a great fort, which Louis XIV destroyed, and then Orange became a French possession by the Treaty of Utrecht. Just think of that foggy little Dutch town when you are standing in the sun of Orange, but remember too that a king of England, a certain William, had a name which originally came from this little gem of a ruined Roman town standing alone on the plain of the Rhône.

The carvings on the Triumphal Arch are well worth investigating, as it is crumbling away, you notice, and gradually there will be little left to see. There are flowers and fruits and boats and horns of plenty and beautiful slave girls and two battle scenes and gladiators; in fact, it is a whole page, or pages if you like, directly out of Roman history. One can well imagine the joy with which they carved the stone, which, with time, has become mellow and apricot-hued. A fig for the antiquarians who tell us it was erected for this or that reason, and who would read thirty-six, or more for aught I know, translations of the faded inscriptions on the Arch. Why not let us admire its beauty while for ourselves resetting the ancient scene?

Rome had invaded Gaul and was building colonies. Ships floated in the blue Mediterranean, and chariots drove along the tracks that were later to become the fine

Roman roads, pioneers of the very roads we admire so much today. In those days the spoils were to the victors—there was no talk of reparations—the Romans took their spoils where they found them. What scenes of riotous splendor! The glory that was Rome found echoes in this backwater where the river drip-dripped and the green trees grew, and the maidens drew near to the glittering soldiery, wondering and half afraid.

Build me a theater, cried the Emperor, and, behold, a theater was built; you can see it this afternoon, stones against a green hill. The colony grew and the Emperor Hadrian was satisfied. What if he could have seen the future of his theater, a fortress and then a stone quarry, and now, thousands of years later, a theater again. Even to-day, after all its vicissitudes, the façade is so imposing that it stuns the mind. They built for posterity, did those Romans.

Enter with me for a moment, for it is worth your while to see things as they must have been, as they were.

Between the wall and the façade note the place which was the stage, and see the actors' dressing-rooms and the little shops where the spectators bought sweetmeats. In the ground, in front of the stage, is the place, still perfectly recognizable, where the curtain rested. In the front rows sat the knights. How do we know? Graven in the stone several times is the word *Equites*.

Nowadays the theater can seat 10,800, and such numbers have been known, but in the times of the Romans they used to have audiences of 40,000. Behind the scenes there is something left of a marble statue of Venus. What those old Romans did not know we, of the present day, could not teach them.

Romance stayed always in and around Orange. Long, long after the Romans had gone, and war devastated the

town, there came along the roads the troubadours making love and making verses, brawling, fighting, living.

Now Orange has sunk once again into peace and calm and content. It is difficult to believe that anything will ever change; the piping of a blackbird in the green cedar tree sounds like a song of eternity; the same shrill note was probably heard when the Romans marched through Gaul, when the Emperor Hadrian built the theater which now once a year is thronged with an audience. Do the Roman ghosts revisit the scenes of their triumphs—and their defeats? I wonder. Do they watch the cars flit by, often skirting the great Arch of Apricot that stands like the arm of an arresting policeman as if daring us to go on without stopping, looking, and learning.

XVI

LA BELLE PROVENCE

CELEBRATED in song and story, written about in prose and verse, the beauties and the attractions of Provence have nevertheless to be personally investigated to be properly appreciated. Nowadays one can fly across the high hills and the green valleys, read a book and sip whisky and soda, and lose even a bird's-eye view of the countryside; a motor car takes one along well-defined routes, good roads and usually in good condition; seen from the windows of a moving train the Provençal country is alluring, but the moment the attention becomes attracted to a particular view, and one wishes one could see more of it, the panorama moves on. The best way to travel through Provence is on foot, taking the risk of indifferent hotels, traveling light, not in the shorts of hikers, because that will attract unwanted attention from women, children, and dogs, and if we want, as we should, to get close to the people, to see them at work and play, it is well not to be too odd. In any case we shall be considered mad, so the best thing to do is to appear as sane as possible. To walk in the cool of the mornings and evenings, and to remember the words of Mr. Noel Coward who stated in words and music that mad dogs and Englishmen stay out in the midday sun.

The trail of the troubadours is as good a road as any to follow in Provence, and although it is as well not to begin to write verses to the eyebrows of strange ladies whose husbands may not appreciate such delicate atten-

tions, we can make friends with people of both sexes, more especially if, when we buy peaches and apricots and figs, we do not bargain too much; but we must bargain a little, otherwise the person selling us fruit will not only be sure we are insane, but he or she will be deeply hurt in self-respect, and it may be thought that the goods offered us are slighted, too.

Let us begin a little tour on foot, lightly clad, but with something warm to wear in the evenings when we sleep on top of a mountain. Never drink water, unless it comes out of a sealed bottle, and do not eat too much raw fruit, and remember that salads are risky, and then all will be well with us. These words of wisdom do not apply, of course, to travelers passing along the trodden routes and putting up at hotels with liveried concierges; they are meant for such as you and I, searching for the real France.

We are in the country of the *cuisine* of oil and butter and saffron, all mixed; good olive oil, fairly good butter and—saffron. If you happen to have a cook from Provence in your kitchen and you tell her to go easy with the butter, she will give you notice. Hard words may not butter parsnips, but a dollop of oil when producing a cheese omelette makes a lot of difference.

The world is divided into two sorts of people, those who like *bouillabaisse* and those who do not. Those who do not include many people who have never had the good fortune to eat of a *bouillabaisse à la provençale*; in fact that is the only one worth eating. It is some little time since I talked about food, so if you will grant me just a few minutes I will write of this immortal dish.

It seems to me that somewhere or other the great Thackeray discoursed on the subject of *bouillabaisse*, but I cannot recall what he wrote. The subject is one that

should make the mouths of true *gourmets* water, just to think of the aroma of the steaming hot dish as it comes to table, the mixture of the spices, the deep brown of the fried rounds of bread, the—well, for heaven's sake, let us go and prepare one.

The housewife living in a village on the coast will go to market and buy a pound of mixed fish, and when she is cleaning them she finds that the bigger fish have swallowed smaller fish, baby crabs maybe, and a shrimp or so, but the whole lot goes into the *bouillabaisse*. On the eastern side of the bay of Cavalaire there is a little village called La Bouillabaisse, and there is a small restaurant there, where the specialities are: the famous fish soup of the same name as the village, and—hot chocolate! No, the two are not taken simultaneously.

I will give you the Provençal recipe for a *bouillabaisse*, which avoids the necessity of making one as the village housewife does. Buy a pound of mixed fish: cod or whiting, carp, eel, some lobster, and any other white fish you can find. Clean and wash them and cut them in large cubes. Take half a dozen onions, a tomato, a couple of bay leaves and three cloves. Cut the onions into quarters, also the tomato. Put the spices and the fish in a linen bag and see that the fish are not squashed. Then take a saucepan and pour into it a little more than half a pint of ordinary white wine, four spoonfuls of good olive oil, salt, pepper, some chopped parsley, and add saffron to taste. Put your linen bag into the saucepan, and if the liquid does not cover it add water until it does. Put the saucepan over a hot fire and let it boil for three-quarters of an hour. Fry a few slices of bread, small ones, and put them in a soup tureen and pour over them the contents of the saucepan. The fish is removed from the linen bag and put into a covered dish and should be eaten after the

soup. This is the first time I have endeavored to write a recipe, so you will excuse me if my technicalities are incorrect, but it is set down with a good heart, and I hope you will enjoy the *bouillabaisse*.

We were, I believe, talking of walking this morning, and we might make a beginning by going to Carpentras, an agreeable town although rather full of tourists. They will have arrived there by train or car; we might take two days to cover the fifteen miles, and we shall not be the losers.

Under the name of Provençia the whole southeast of France linked Italy and Spain; the name has remained only so far as the most southeasterly angle of the country is concerned. The rivers and the mountains and the valleys make natural divisions of the soil, but the almost eternal sunshine links them all together. The Provençals are strange people; their language leans toward the Italian, as do their looks, but they have much of the cruelty of the Spaniards, although they have the natural gaiety of the French. They are not, on the whole, hard workers, although when the time for the grape harvest comes they are early among the vines. Their wants are few, and Nature provides for them. They eat very little meat, which is as well, because the plains do not support many cows or sheep, and the peasants are content with goats' milk and cheese. They drink much wine, but this is plentiful and cheap. Fruits there are in almost superabundance, melons and lemons, oranges and figs, and peaches and apricots. One must tramp through Provence to know how many different varieties there are of fresh figs: the tiny little red ones which are purple without and scarlet within, the bigger variety, with a deep purple, almost black skin, and a light purple inside, and many other kinds that one sees hanging in masses on the trees, dropping with a squashing

plop on the ground, or piled high in the market squares, so ripe that they are about to burst.

Stand on any hilltop and you look down upon neat terraced gardens. It is rare to see corn or barley, they can grow that elsewhere. Here you have dark green olive trees by the thousand, and many, many fig trees. Mimosa grows thickly—from a distance the eye seems to look at big yellow parasols. Among the vines are peaches, small juicy peaches, which seem poor relations of the opulent fruit you find in the swagger greengrocers of Bond Street or Fifth Avenue. But pick a hatful and you will sigh more than once when you are far away and remember the gardens of *la belle Provence*.

The oranges are not of the best quality; there is a variety to be found which is juicy enough, but the better ones come from Spain. Melons in the late summer are cheap and wonderful; they are not watermelons, but the canteloupe type which seems to become expensive the moment it leaves the confines of Provence. It is not the growers who make the money.

In Provence we shall find men of a mixed physical type, partly Roman, partly Greek, and partly Saracen. The men are for the most part small, but strong enough, with bronzed faces and jet-black hair. The women you see kneeling and talking, washing their clothes in the streams that pass by the villages, are more pretty than beautiful, but gay in manner, and both men and women talk and talk and talk.

Football began to be seen in France before the World War, but it is since that time that the sport has really seized hold of the people. Considered as a winter game by English and Americans, football in France knows no seasonal limit; it is never too hot to see a group of youths kicking a ball. In Provence there is little organized play,

except in the villages where they play bowls. Perish the thought of green lawns, as smooth as a billiard table; think not of heavy "woods" with a bias. The French game of bowls is played with light wooden balls which by dint of wear and tear are not always as round as they used to be. The "greens" are just a length of well-trodden earth, *terre battue*, as it is called, or often enough you will come across a game being played just outside the village church.

"*Boule*" is a happy adjunct to the earnings of a café keeper in Provence. He will have a "green" out at the back, and in the evenings and on Sundays there will always be a game going on. There are cups to be won and money to be earned.

The Provençal language, which was spoken by the majority of people in the Midi until the fourteenth century, is a blending of French and Italian, but more like Italian. The troubadours wrote their songs in it, and Petrarch who copied the style of the troubadours wrote in Provençal. Out of their own literature the Provençals evolved the first type of writing still known in France today as the "*romans de mœurs*."

Petrarch in his youth lived in Carpentras, and we should have no difficulty in imagining the small boy playing outside the cathedral and looking with awe on the wandering troubadours, who time and time again must have come by the same road from Orange we have been traveling; perhaps they forded the rivers we crossed by bridges, or maybe there were foot-bridges even in those days, but the scenic setting must have been exactly the same.

In the very far distance there are the foothills of the Alps, and in between them and us are rolling green plains, and Mount Ventoux, too, which Petrarch certainly

climbed, as poets do, in order to be inspired to write about Nature.

Nowadays, alas, there are no poets—unless they are mute and we thus never hear them—to climb mountains; the climbing is done by the tourists; but a truce to them and their demands for constant hot water! Let us look at the walled villages, which are now only walled in parts, and through the gaps mother hens walk so stately, heading a procession of running balls of yellow fluff. The villages were never very big, but it is evident that in olden times they were built for a population larger than that of today. The houses are tall and narrow and have flat roofs, but there are so few inhabitants that only birds seem to live in the upper stories. There are many ruins of castles, heaps of bricks and stones, and nothing but our imagination to people them, for the peasants never go near them, and can tell us nothing about them. They were there and they are there and that is all there is about it. They stand with bated breath and watch one of their own pitch a little wooden ball along a stretch of well-trodden earth, and they applaud generously a good shot, and they quaff wine when the sun is crossing the twelve o'clock line, and eat a chunk of dry bread and spread over it a slice of raw onion, but nothing bothers these good people; and yet, if they but knew it, their festivals and their merrymakings, their music and their dancing goes right back and is unchanged; it dates from before the time when the ruined castle on the hill was still whole, and when my lady looked from her bower down on to the courtyard where a troubadour sang his song, words and music by himself.

The music is the music of the fife and drum and tambourine; in some parts of Provence the dancing goes back and back to the invasion of the Moors, and when you see the swaying bodies, and the movement of the hips, you

feel you are in an Arab café and not in France; but are you? You are in Provence. Not all dancing is of this kind. I write of traditional dances, and these you see only on special occasions; but the folk-dances, as it were, go on being taught by mothers to daughters and fathers to sons; yet if we happen to drop in at a small *auberge* on a Saturday night we would not believe it.

In shady arbors—*bosquets*, as they call them—young men and girls sit and talk and drink, the girls usually some soft drink; for the men a liter of a local wine. Then the music strikes up; no jazz band or Argentine tango musicians; it is a mechanical piano, but such a one!

The *patron* of the inn has invested much money in the very latest style of mechanical piano. It is equipped with drums and cymbals, and I know not what other instruments of musical torture; it produces the same effect as a three-man band; it is loud and boisterous, but it pleases the dancers. On an earthen floor they dance, none of your languid waltzing, or intricate tango, not even a fox-trot, but a quick sort of waltz, or a jerky polka, the sort of dance that makes you mop your forehead and calls for a glass of something to drink. The mechanical piano earns its money.

Yet, some other time, when there is a local festival, these very same young people will dance the graceful dances their ancestors danced centuries ago, and they will dance without a trace of self-consciousness.

I was, I believe, talking about Carpentras, which you perceive stands on the bank of a river in which there is little water. That is a way rivers in Provence have, they are so seldom in working order. From Orange we crossed three or four rivers, but each one was nothing much more than a name, a rocky bed with a trickle of water. Water shortages are too frequent to become news; in every

garden there is a tank to collect rainwater, and also on the roofs of most houses there are tanks for the same purpose; shortages of water and the disagreeable wind called the *Mistral* are the two flies in the Provençal ointment; otherwise life in Provence would be perfect, and that would be too boring. You have perhaps heard the story—stop me if you have—of the auctioneer who was selling a property? He praised it and he praised it and then, before beginning to ask for bids, his voice broke slightly, and he said: “Ladies and gentlemen, candor forces me to admit there are two drawbacks to the property I am now offering for sale: the litter of rose leaves and the noise of the nightingales.”

Now I can cap that story. A lady I know rented a small villa in Provence. It stood on the side of a hill. In the garden there were orange trees and lemon trees and fig trees. There were rose trees by the score, there were carnations and other sweet-smelling flowers. And my friend complained she had to get up in the night and close the windows because the nightingales made such a devil of a row.

Now I come to think of it, there is nothing much to tell you about Carpentras, but it has moved me to tell stories, so let us leave it and go on to Avignon. I should warn you, however, that if you have any intention of dancing on the bridge the traffic regulations are strict, and the police have no sense of humor. Anyhow, it is not this bridge at all which is mentioned in the song; that bridge is that ruined one over there; but this land of Provence moves me to story-telling, and I would like you to know my version of that tale.

It was a little boy who tended goats who built that bridge. Still today in France you will hear little boys and girls singing:

Sur le pont d'Avignon
On y danse, on y danse,
Sur le pont d'Avignon
On y danse tous en rond.

But how many of these tiny tots have been told that one day when the little goatherd was alone in a field a beam of light appeared to him and a Voice said he was to go to Avignon. The boy was a sharp little lad, because history records that he asked who would look after the flock of goats when he went away? The Voice answered that all would be well. The boy's name was Benézet, and he did as he was told and he set out for Avignon; but when he reached the river Rhône there was no way to cross except by the ferry, and the ferryman would not take the boy because he had no money. Finally he agreed to take the child across, but in midstream he again asked for money, and the boy said that although he had no money the ferryman had to take him across because he, the boy, intended to build a bridge there. That did not please the ferryman at all, and according to the legend, the ferryman, who seems to have been an exceedingly unpleasant individual, fell upon the boy and tried to throw him into the river. He did not succeed, and Benézet reached Avignon and went straight to the cathedral where they were celebrating Mass, and standing in front of the altar the boy announced he was going to build a bridge. The bishop and the priest and the congregation were all angry at the interruption and tried to shoo the boy away, but little Benézet would not go away, and he kept repeating that a vision had appeared to him and had told him to go to Avignon, and now he was here he was going to build a bridge.

After Mass everybody went out into the courtyard and

Benézet repeated his story, but still nobody took any notice. Then the bishop pointed to a huge stone, several times the size and weight of the little boy, and the bishop said, well, if you are so clever, take up that stone. Little Benézet just picked up that stone like nothing at all and marched with it to the Rhône. Then the bishop and his clergy knew they had seen a miracle, and the bridge was built and many years after little Benézet was dead they made him a saint. But if you ask me why this story of the miracle of St. Benézet should have anything to do with a children's nursery rhyme, I am afraid I cannot tell you.

I suppose that while we are in Avignon we shall have to go and see the Palace of the Popes. I say this in no disrespect for that glorious poem in stone, but because I do so hate to be taken round anywhere by a professional guide, and be made to listen when I would rather look. There is one guide who takes people round the Palace of the Popes at Avignon upon whom I could willingly commit mayhem. Often we talk of people who like to listen to the sound of their own voices, but this guide does. Of all his wife's relations he likes himself the best. The tall ceilings of the Palace rooms lend themselves to elocution; in the gay nineties this guide must have found that out. He does not so much talk as declaim; at any moment, so it seems, he might burst into song. If there is something you would admire, he turns an unforgiving eye on you; when he and his group pass from one room into another, he glares round to see if anybody is in hiding, and then with a sinister click he locks the door behind him, as much as to say: that will teach him a lesson.

And yet, my friends, there is so much muted history in that glorious Palace of the Popes that I, and probably many of my kind, would give much to be allowed to go in alone and roam at will. But I can hear that guide

mutter: "Only over my dead body." Avignon is one of those cities of France which give you a thrill the moment you set eyes on them. One expects something sleepy, but here is a large city with about fifty thousand inhabitants, quite a big garrison, partly consisting of colored troops, and yet entirely unspoilt from the interest point of view.

Avignon seems to stand alone on the Rhône, walled and ramparted, if I may use such a word, and neat and clean as can be. People will tell you it takes two days to see Avignon "properly," a word which always makes me want to break something particularly solid. Once upon a time a man said to the Pope that he was going to spend three months in Rome. "You will see a little of Rome," said the Pope. Another man said he was going to stay three weeks in Rome. "You will see something of Rome," remarked the Pope. Another man told His Holiness that he was going to stay a day in Rome. "Ah," exclaimed the Pope, "you will see Rome."

That wise remark may also be applied to Avignon. Be sure to see the broken bridge of St. Benézet (they are repairing it) by moonlight, if there is a moon, and then wander about the city and look in the courtyard of the more unpretentious hotels and you will find them looking as if they were expecting the mail coach; I agree that some of the bedrooms support the same illusion, but that cannot be helped. You will find the courtyard stone-flagged, and with iron rings on the walls waiting for the horses to be tethered to them. You will be expecting to hear the jingle of harness and the crack of whips, but all you will see is a mass-produced motor car backing in, and a voice asking if there is running hot and cold water.

The Palace of the Popes was once upon a time just as much a fortress as a palace; it has been besieged and

heavily attacked, and the inside of it has witnessed some pretty dirty work, especially when at the end of the eighteenth century they drove sixty persons into the courtyard and massacred them, in revenge for the murder of a man named Lescuyer. Pope Jean XXII was the first to live in the Palace, and each succeeding Pope spent much money on enlarging and embellishing the building; with the coming of each Pope the Palace became grander and grander. What banquets they gave! You can see the spacious kitchen where these meals were cooked, the huge open fire where they put thirty chickens on the spit; what haunches of veal, what sides of beef used to sizzle and splutter over the wood fire!

But even if they looked in serious manner after the inner man, as well they might, the courtrooms showed another serious aspect of the times. The high bench where the bishops sat in judgment. If that flatulent Adelphic guide would only bide a wee, we might stay a moment and repeople this courtroom.

Down that stone spiral staircase the members of the court would come, in almost silent majesty; they would take their seats in silence, a silence broken only by the rustle of their rich robes. The members seated would lean over and whisper to one another. Then the appellants would be brought in from the waiting chamber, and each in humble, halting phrases would speak his opposition to laws set out by this High Court.

The Court of Justice is a noble chamber, divided by about six pillars. On one side there are crumbling fragments of a fresco representing Calvary and the Last Judgment. Huge audience chambers, big and desolate, yet they look as if they were ready to be occupied at any moment. The outside of the Palace may be in need of repair, it is, but the inside seems just as if it were vacation

time, and the judges grave of mien were with their families in some retired spot waiting for a session to be called. You know that the men who sat in learned judgment six hundred years ago have long since gone, but the clatter of soles on the stone floors seems as if it were merely an interlude and not an epilogue to those spacious days which will never come to Avignon again.

What we really like about Avignon is its pleasant mingling of the played-out past and the present; you can let your imagination run riot with the Middle Ages this afternoon, and eat a *table d'hôte* dinner and go to the talkies this evening, and both efforts will seem exactly right.

There was once a castle not very far away in which lived three brothers named Uzéz. I will give the story from the original French:

"Although Guy d'Uzéz was the sole lord of the castle, which he inherited from his father, the revenue was so small that he and his brothers were unable to subsist on it. Ebles, one of the brothers, who was an astute man, remonstrated to Guy and the other brother Pierre on the small income they had, which was not enough to keep them alive, and said that because they knew how to sing and write poems he thought it would be better for them to follow the courts of the princes than to stay at home and starve in idleness. His brothers thought this was a good idea, so they wrote their cousin Hellyas, a gentleman in the neighborhood who was a good singer, and begged him to go with them, and he did not refuse at all. Before they left they decided that the songs which Guy made and the *sirventes* which Ebles created should be sung by Pierre who was a very good musician; that they would always stay together and that Guy would take care of the money and divide it among them.

"But it came to pass that they prospered well until Ebles began to write, not love songs, but songs attacking the misdeeds of the lords and bishops, and the Pope's legate made them promise not to sing any more such songs, but they refused and withdrew to their castle, rich and full of goods which they had acquired by means of their poesy."

Gaily the troubadour . . .

One summer I was driving back to the South of France and night fell as I was approaching Avignon. Now there are towns, even in France, which I would drive through and continue on until long after dark rather than stay there, but Avignon is not one of them. So in Avignon I stayed and ate a modest meal and then turned my thoughts to bed and the long drive that lay before me in the morning. But it was a summer's night, and there was a moon and stars, and it was cool, so I sat in the Cours de la République, on a bench opposite a cinema. The breeze stirred the tops of the plane trees, and people sat on the benches enjoying the air and talking in whispers. It was a night for romance, but the people sitting about in this oblong square were not romantic-looking at all; the women were fat and elderly, and the men had removed their collars and ties. Walking up and down, making the hundred steps as the French say, was a smart-looking girl; she was young and slim and dark, pretty, very, but in a hard-looking way. She was out of the picture of these goodly *bourgeois* taking their evening's ease, and although it was evident that her waiting had something to do with a visit to the cinema, it was long after the performance had begun. So I wondered, and I thought of the olden times, of the obliterated trail of the troubadours, how the land of

once-upon-a-time Romance was now peopled by fat women and collarless men.

The girl was standing a pace or two from my seat. She looked very annoyed. She was watching an approaching young man. He clasped her tight and she reproached him for his tardiness. He kissed her and mumbled excuses, I could hear them. The old folks at home, the difficulty of getting away so soon after dinner; she must understand how things were; if he was dependent on them for money, he had to do as they said, and had to wait until they retired to bed before he could step out of the house. She seemed mollified. It was too late to go to the cinema? Well, another night. Tonight?

She put up her lips to be kissed. I looked up as he kissed her, and the light shone searingly clear on his face. He was the waiter who had served me my dinner.

Gaily the troubadour . . .

XVII

THE KINGDOM OF ROY RENÉ

LET us from Avignon follow the Rhône to where it drops into the Mediterranean, and then we will go north once more to Aix and to Sisteron and to Barcelonnette, which is northeast, and then we will run over Napoleon's road to Nice, and what the world calls the Riviera.

Mistral wrote so much about his beloved Provence, and his works have been so freely translated, that there is very little left to learn about the private lives of *les provençals*, yet I wonder whether after all everything is known that there is to know? How about the annual meeting of all the gypsies? Have you ever heard of it? And that queer form of rodeo in La Camargue which undoubtedly existed long before there were any cowboys in the wild and woolly West.

Many quaint Provençal customs undoubtedly originated in Italy, for the Italians are first cousins of these people, as you may discover at Easter time, when the peasants go to Mass with sprigs of palms, and the children have green paper streamers on sticks to which are tied sticky sweets. At Christmastide, too, you can find fairs similar to those you may come across in Rome, where they sell plaster dolls for the replicas of the Stable which many rich or near-rich families build in their own homes, and which are to be found likewise in local churches. At Baux, up in the mountains near Aix, the local shepherds and shepherd girls go to church with a lamb, taken into the edifice

in a little cart drawn by a goat. The lamb is to be given to the Infant Jesus. The hymn they sing during the presentation is the same they used to sing in the seventeenth century. The Lent Carnival at Nice is naturally a spectacle especially designed to attract foreigners, and the merry-makers are hired at so many francs a day. But in the more remote parts of Provence this is not the case; the annual carnivals are the occasion for merry-making, but it is real, and the annual meeting of the French gypsies, on the occasion of the festival at Sainte Marie de la Mer, is as solemn in its way as a Republican Convention.

From all over France the caravans come, patient plodding horses covering mile after mile of the Roman roads which have lasted so long. They take their time, do the gypsies, no hurry at all, but when summer comes you will find they have left their northern haunts and are on the move southwards for their annual gathering. As we roam the roads you may have noticed outside hundreds of villages a signboard saying that that particular spot was the limit where the "nomads" could park. They call them nomads in official French, but the people call them Bohemians (so now, you frequenters of Greenwich Village and Bloomsbury, now you know) and rather like them. It is a pity there is no French Borrow to write the story of the French gypsies, for if there are any in Europe who really have a history, it is the French species. Often one hears that such and such a race is one or both of the lost Tribes of Israel; well, many of the French gypsies have Jewish names, such as Levy.

Like their brothers across the Channel and in the States, the French gypsies mend chairs and hawk mops and tell fortunes, and have many other sorts of graft which one cannot quite understand; but no matter how they earn their living, the chief of each tribe sends out word that so



Courtesy Railways of France

BONNES-LES-MIMOSAS, A VILLA ON THE FRENCH RIVIERA



Courtesy French Government Tourist Bureau

LAC DU BOURGET, WITH THE ALPS IN THE BACKGROUND

many people from the tribe must go south. It is a very long journey, but none shirk, and when the time comes for the meeting there are thousands of them—old and young, and small children—assembled on the salt marshes near the mouth of the Rhône.

All over Provence, at Aix and at Tarascon particularly, there are carnivals with strange cardboard figures and animals, and many may think, quite possibly with much correctness, that these strange gods are not very far removed from paganism. When the Romans came to France, to Provence, the people were pagans. The Paschal Lamb of the Christian Church, the lamb bone at the Jewish Passover Night service, have one common origin in the pagan slaughtering of a lamb to propitiate the pagan gods at springtime. Is there not some surviving connection between the strange carnivals in the towns between the mountains and the sea, and the piping of the oldest god—Pan?

Surely it is the pipe of Pan we hear, disguised I grant you as a flute, when the two decorated barges put out on the river or a lake, each with a high platform built as a superstructure on the prow? On each platform is a young man with a lance beneath his arm; they are jousting, and they will parry and thrust until one or the other is cast over, tumbling down with a splash into the water.

I have referred elsewhere to the tambourines of the Provençal people. Heaven alone knows how many societies there are still in existence, people who meet just to play the tambourine. Later on I shall be taking you over to a bull-fight at Fréjus, but come with me now and see that unique rodeo performance to be found only among the salt marshes on the delta at the mouth of the Rhône and near Arles, on the right bank of the Vi-

dourle, in Languedoc. It is something entirely different from what you may find in the fine arena at Nîmes, which is almost real bull-fighting imported from across the frontier of Spain; but here they breed a special kind of bull for the favorite sport, a wiry little animal, full of fight.

It is a struggle between the bulls and the *gardians*, as they call the cowboys, a fight consisting of speed and strength and agility, shown both by the bull and the man; the danger to the man is more apparent than real; it is much like a speedway race, and to heighten the resemblance, there are the women watching to applaud the doughty knights, and to be thrilled and half-frightened when the *gardian* takes a toss, just as the cowboy or the speedway rider does at his sport.

The idea is to catch the bull and throw him, and brand him with an iron. The bull is either brought to the scene of the sport in a cart, or else driven along the road by men on horses; if a cow is taken with the bulls they will be docile. When the bull is being taken out of the cart, the youngsters of the village try to make him escape; that is considered an essential part of the entertainment; then the bull makes straight for the marshes and the job of capturing him becomes more difficult. The arena is no ancient theater, no relic of the Romans; it is an open space with nothing but the sky and the sun above, and the level plain and the sea in the middle distance. The spectators sit on carts or on high barrels and shout with glee when the bull comes bouncing in with a gay cockade between his horns. While the spectators at a safe distance goad and tease the animal, the bull is supposed to defend his colors from the man who is trying to lasso, throw, and brand him.

Now and again there are vague protests against cruelty

from people who are not of Provence, but if they suppressed the lassoing, there could be no suggestion of anything cruel in the sport. After these displays there are often horseraces, banquets, speeches, and a reconstruction of the ancient Courts of Love; but it is not often that foreigners have the opportunity of being present at these festivities.

Les Baux, where they mysteriously murdered an Englishwoman, is a ruined city with a population of not more than fifty persons—there are fewer than three hundred in the whole parish—and yet what a city Les Baux must once have been! All through the twelfth century the troubadours wandered along the roads and byways close to Les Baux. The masses of unrecognizable stones scattered here were the stately homes of the period; lords and ladies looked out on the same vistas we see, the same old moon shone on the same hills, but where today is nothing more than desolation, in those spacious days was passion and romance; the poets inspired it with their spirited verses and their songs.

To talk for a moment of Les Baux. The ruins are on top of a hill. There are two roads to it, one coming from Tarascon, and the other from Arles. Today rats and mice sport among the ruins where once fashion trod, lizards take the sun on the grassy slopes where formerly lovers sighed for their mistresses. They are square ruins, you will notice; what is left of the windows shows they were Gothic. It is a ghastly sight in the daytime, this relic of former grandeur, but let us try to see it as it was, when for five hundred years Les Baux was the very center of affairs, when Crusading was in fashion, and men wrote verse for the sheer joy of it.

Les Baux stood well back from the bustling highway which was the road from Marseilles to Lyons, the road

the Crusaders took, as did the traffic bound for Cherbourg, or northeast to Coblenz on the Rhine. According to old records, the women of Les Baux were beautiful, and the troubadours flocked to their bowers to pay homage. While the troubadours assailed their ladies in the castles, the common people were entertained by jugglers in the inns, but whereas there is nothing, neither stick nor stone, to mark the site of an inn, there are plenty of small but significant things to help us see the France that was in the days when Les Baux was as fashionable as Bath or Atlantic City.

The Queen of Love held her Court in a sort of pavilion in a garden which was below the heap of ruins you see over there. Members of the Court assisting the Queen were the Bailiff of Delight, the Marshal of Mourning, the Provost of the Hawthorn, the Seneschal of the Eglantine, and the Lords of the Privilege of Love. The business of the Court was to sort out the verses of the poets, to praise the good and to reject and make fun of the bad. One can reconstruct the scene without great difficulty, the scent of the roses, the twittering of the birds, and the ladies beautifully dressed, reclining at their ease and listening to the whispered verses of the poets. A pretty scene. I wonder what that old, old woman over there, bent with rheumatics, would think if we asked her whether she had ever been Queen of a Court of Love?

Berengaria of Baux was a reigning beauty of the time, and she fell in love with Guilheim de Cabestanh, so relates Raimon de Loi, who knows more of these things than I. Guilheim had decided to leave his own castle and go to Les Baux, and here he met the daughter of the lord of the town. There seems to have been no question of marriage, but Berengaria went to consult a local witch, of whom there were many; they appeared sometimes in

human form and sometimes as toads or other noxious animals. The wise woman told Berengaria to go collect some herbs by moonlight and bring them to the witch's hut. The witch distilled a brew and told Berengaria to give it to Guilheim the next time he climbed to her bower.

Poor Guilheim, he drank and was sorry; he nearly died, and when he got better he went away and fell in love with the wife of a man called Rémond de Seilhans, who loved him too. Guilheim wrote a poem to the lady, but addressed it to the husband and was asked to come and stay at the castle. The wife's name was Tricline, and she had a sister with whom Guilheim pretended to be in love so as not to arouse the jealousy of the husband, but the husband spied on both his wife and her sister, and assured himself that Guilheim was the lover of them both. Then he invited Guilheim to a hunting party and when they were separated from the rest of the party Rémond de Seilhans stabbed Guilheim to death, cut out his heart and gave it to the cook, and cut off his head and stuffed it in his hunting-bag.

The remainder of the story you should skip unless you have a strong stomach. At food Rémond twitted his wife with her poor appetite, and told her she had been eating her lover's heart; then he pulled out the head of Guilheim and held it up by the hair. Finally Tricline rose to her feet, took a dagger and stabbed herself to death.

There are innumerable stories about Les Baux, that ruined but once famous town, and I wish I were allowed to tell the true story of the Englishwoman who was found murdered; her murderer has gone unpunished. The once great castles are falling away into nothing, the hills of sandstone gleam startling white in the bright sunshine; it is more than a ruined city, it is a ghostly city, and never

more so than when you walk through the Grotto of the Fairies, the Valley of Death, or see the Pavilion of Queen Jeanne. By daylight Les Baux is ugly, but the snow-white moon softens everything, and you can stand and contemplate and think of the dead poets and the wicked Seilhans and the beautiful Berengaria and puzzle it all out, the why and the wherefore of this thing called Life.

Once again I have been day-dreaming and kept you waiting while we should have been going to Arles, that once-upon-a-time capital. Here we are then, in the beautiful cathedral city where you may see many pretty Arlésiennes in their national costumes.

Never try to motor in Arles; if you will walk with me you will soon see why not. There is one wide road, the road by which you come in, and you go out by the same wide road; but when the Romans built Arles they did not build it for man-sized traffic; the streets are as crooked as corkscrews, and none the less picturesque for that, but we shall get on much better if we leave the car outside a café and walk.

The Greeks and the Gauls were the originators of Arles; in the year 45 B.C. the Romans came and established a colony with veterans of the 6th Legion. It prospered; there came the time when the river resounded to the building of ships and soldiers encamped on the islands in the river. There were mighty doings, and journeys to and fro. Arles became known as the "little Rome," just as nowadays they call Brussels the "little Paris." The Emperor Constantine built himself a palace at Arles, and more and more people came flocking to the city on the Rhône.

Arles never looked back; lived all through wars and rebellions, prospered until the Black Plague came in 1720 and wiped out ten thousand people. From then on Arles

went slipping. Today there are about seventeen thousand people, mostly living on passing tourists and making the famous sausage.

This great indivisible France needs no apology and I would not attempt to explain anything, except when I may be permitted to help the French to explain themselves, their points of view, their philosophy. Nevertheless, I must put on record that nothing in the whole country is more helpful to understand France than this land of Provence. I have tried to show the people, not only here, but everywhere, as they are at home, not for show, but as they live in their cottages, their flats, their factories, and their cafés. Like many better writers, I am a cynic, yet I believe that France is immortal, and I believe that the country is greater than the people; but I believe also that the greatest of the French people are the peasants. I have read, as no doubt you have read, Zola, and I know his terrible indictment of the French peasants; Zola was a crude realist, and if you remember *L'Assommoir*, you will recall that he also attacked the factory workers, but both in the books about the worker and in those about the peasant Zola found good amongst the bad; so I agree that all the peasants are not the fine people I believe the majority are, but I do know that those who live close to the soil, no matter where they live, whether in Europe or in the Americas, are the real people, even though they may not be conscious of their own history. I have used Arles as a peg on which to hang a profession of faith because Arles, the living-dead city with the great past, is not typical of France, and you cannot judge France by its plumbing.

We will leave Arles and travel across the lonely Craux, a stony countryside where nothing grows. There are salt marshes and big lakes where seagulls screech. To the

south is Istrés, the famous flying field, perhaps the most famous in the whole country; but it is used for military and naval purposes and visitors are advised not to extend their stay.

Gradually the scenery becomes more welcoming, there are trees and then small forests, and then bigger ones, and very soon we are in the land that looks more like the France we know. But it is rocky still, then the rocks give place to hills and fine views, and very soon we are rolling into Aix-en-Provence, once the capital of King René.

This is the ancient capital of Provence. The first time you reach Aix when you are motoring from Paris to the South you will like it and you will always remember it as the frontier to the fine weather. You may have had snow most of your journey, the skies were gray and you wondered whether your journey would be worth while. You had thought that the sunny skies, the heavenly blue, the sweet-scented flowers were all part and parcel of the posters; but they existed in printed color only. It seemed that there must be winter everywhere. As you came to Aix there was a slight improvement, and then, in the morning, you knew!

We can safely put Aix among the adorable cities of France. It is so cheerful, and the *Aixois* such charming people; the girls are so pretty, and there is a general air of coquetry which pervades the whole city. I have never been able to discover if the *Aixois* are particularly learned, but never anywhere in France have I noticed so many bookshops as in Aix.

The city is fortunate in that it is hot but shady in the summer, and cold but sheltered in the winter. A worthy writer of a French guide-book said of Aix (I noted it): "Aix is a silent and discreet town, aristocratic and learned; it has lost its splendor, but it has kept its grace." Now,

isn't that nice? Personally I have never had occasion to test its discretion, but I am willing to believe the fact. On the other hand I am ready to subscribe to the city's relative silence, to its appearance of aristocracy, and I will accept the number of the bookshops as a token of its wisdom.

The beautiful trees, the splashing fountains, the fine and broad avenues make Aix a city where you would always willingly return. Coming in from the north the first building you will notice is the Casino, always a refuge for the noisy ones who motor the short distance from Marseilles to make whatever the Marseillais's equivalent for whoopee is.

But do not think Aix was always the nice quiet retiring city it is now. Oh, dear, no! I had occasion to remark that I felt that the Lyonnais sometimes removed their bridges and shifted their streets in order to make life difficult for passing motorists, but the *Aixoïs* do not move bridges or streets, oh, dear me, they move the whole city. They do, I assure you; they have moved it no fewer than three times. Aix is the oldest of the Roman cities of Gaul; it originated more than 120 years B.C. and had a very checkered history until the time of the annexation of Provence to France. But what times the *Aixoïs* knew in their centuries of history! And, you see, it ends in peace, in shady avenues and splashing fountains. They only remember their King René as a figure of stone on a pedestal, and as the name of a hotel for passing tourists, yet there were glorious times during the reign of the ill-starred brother of Louis II.

I could dwell for a long time on the charms of Aix and the *Aixoïs*, and show you, too, the *outsides* of some pretty pieces of architecture; but time does not stand still, so we will leave the silent and aristocratic Aix and pass along due north, riding alongside the river Durance, not durance

vile, but Durance beautiful, until we come to the town of Les Mées; here we will cross the river and travel through the valley until we come to Sisteron.

May I tell you what Michelet wrote, when he terminated his tome on Provence? He said: "How is it this country has become so dull? . . . I see nothing but ruins." If you have listened carefully to your compère you will possibly have reached the same conclusion as the famous expert of Provence, but if he cannot explain why it is, how should I? Different eyes see the same thing from different aspects, from different angles; the young like to think of the future, the middle-aged and the old to contemplate the past. Michelet was trying to cross his eyes, as it were, or, so I presume, to keep one eye on the past and the other on the present; but if he thought the present so dull, how must he have regarded the future?

Many Americans say Europe is old, worn out, and effete; they are not so hard on England as they are on France; but it is true, I think, that one of the charms of France is that it has everything. Just like a very charming and beautiful woman who is also witty and intelligent, a rare combination in either woman or country, I grant you, but is my comparison not just? Is there any country which combines all the charms of France? The face of the country reflects the inside beauties, the realities. An American will boast that his country has mighty rivers, great mountains, broad lakes; that is all positively true, just as true as the old-world inn round the corner of any English lane, the tankard of nut-brown ale, the hunk of bread and the chunk of cheese, the rolling downs; of course, that is all true, as accurate as the beautiful beer of Munich, or the delightful Rhenish castles; speak if you want to of the charms of Vienna, or the music-haunted nights of Budapest, I agree with you absolutely. Would you murmur

to me of the tinkling of a guitar in Havana, or sunset over the Church of St. Basil in Red Square? I have seen that also, and I liked it very much, and I hope to see again some of the sights I have mentioned; but—and there is a but—it was not of isolated scenes I was talking; I was trying to focus your mind on France as an entity; scenery, life, people, food, drink, all the things which make life civilized and worth living. Maybe you have not been listening?

Sisteron? Yes, sir, here you are. Look at that great big brown-looking lighthouse jutting out over a sea of green trees. Have you ever seen its like? The town, you will perceive, is built round a high rock and in a narrow defile which is dominated by the castle, that brown-looking lighthouse, which in turn commands the ford of the river Durance. The priests and the soldiers and the merchants, the cities were always built by one of the trinity, and the big cities which have lasted throughout the ages were usually built by a combination of the three. I have perhaps been a little long in cutting the cackle and getting to the horses, but that is my answer to Monsieur Michelet when he asks what has become of Provence. The cities were built for pleasure, or by priests, seldom by merchants, and never by the combination of the three. If a French city was to live, it had to be built near a crossroad so that there was traffic, commerce; if the city was to be a fort, all well and good, a fort it was, and a fort, so far as Nature is concerned, it will always be; but without the roads the city was doomed.

The Romans built Sisteron, and in the fourth century it became the see of a bishop. Its defenses were built in the fourteenth century. The Catholics took Sisteron from the Huguenots; what a task they must have had; and the Huguenots took it back again; their task could have been

no lighter. But all that is way, way back; we could forget all about Sisteron were it not for something else. Sisteron was one of the keys to European history. When Napoleon escaped from Elba and landed at Golfe Juan, he set out for Paris. Up the rocky road he traveled, thinking his thoughts and planning his revenge. He had gone into exile with the approbation of the Emperor of the French who had been fêted in London. But would the Little Corporal be able to reach Paris; would the French troops be loyal to their Emperor or to the "Corsican Upstart"? Sisteron was the key to the situation. To be or not to be? The garrison of Sisteron allowed their former leader to pass.

Is it idle to think what might have been? May we not, as we toil up the rocky path to the brown castle standing sentinel over the green sea of trees, think what might have been the history of Europe if the garrison of Sisteron had said "No," had taken the Corsican prisoner? No Waterloo, and all that meant; perhaps a strong France for years to come, no Franco-Prussian War, perhaps no—but it is too foolish to go on. The garrison of Sisteron allowed Napoleon to pass.

Now let us be on our way again, for the townsmen of Sisteron will not be able to aid us in our study of the might-have-been. We will make across country to Barcelonette, and then either come down that nerve-shattering Napoleon Road to the coast, or else go to Grasse. Which would you prefer? Both. *Soit!*

Only those with good nerves should attempt the Napoleon Road drive, but even more important than having good nerves of your own, be sure that your passengers have even better, for they will need them, and so will you. The drive is through mountain gorges, over swift-flowing torrents, and so for many miles the scenery never

changes; but the drive is nerve-racking enough, quite apart from the nervous tension that mountains produce in many people. Rarely is the road wide enough to allow for two cars to pass. On each side of the road is a drop sheer down into disaster. Every few hundred yards is a notice board stating that at such and such a distance is a *garage*, but do not expect to find petrol pumps and friendly men selling oil and gas and giving free service; the word *garage* is to be taken in its most literal sense; it just means a shelter, and the shelter consists of a hollow carved into the side of the mountain, which gives the road a little added width. Thus, if you see a car coming, you may, if you are near to a *garage*, stand aside and allow the other fellow to pass; but when two cars meet, coming from opposite directions, and there is no possibility of passing, then one or the other has to back his car along the narrow winding road, with a drop sheer down into disaster if he makes a false move. Now shall we go to Grasse? I think so.

This old town in the hills is undergoing a rebirth, and is typical enough of the power of the peasant, the refusal to be beaten—a trait incidentally supposed to be British! Grasse, a beautiful little town hidden away in the hills, was from long ago the home of French perfume, the scent that scented the pocket-handkerchiefs of the world. The last Tsarina had a special attar of roses prepared for her at Grasse. The sides of the hills are terraced out so that the jasmine, which forms the foundation of most of the best-known scents, can get the best part of the sun. The air was sweet with the heady smell of millions of flowers, the roses, the carnations, the cloves and the jasmine. The scent factories did a thriving business. But then came War and Revolution and Depression, and the expensive

scents evaporated into the stench which permeated the world. Grasse was hit—hard.

What did Grasse do; sit down and weep? It did nothing of the sort; factories were there, the laboratories were there, and there were the bottling staffs; if the world would not, could not buy scent, what could Grasse make that France at least would buy?

From overseas came a remarkable tale, that those crazy Americans were drinking tomato juice. *Oui, mon ami*; just figure that to yourself. Name of a little good man! But why not let us give Frenchmen the juice of our fine ripe and blood-red love apples? Let us grow them where grew the jasmine, bottle the juice where we used to bottle the perfumes of Araby.

And so it came to pass. They still make scent, they still grow flowers on the hillsides of Grasse, but they grow an awful lot of tomatoes.

XVIII

SUN WORSHIPERS

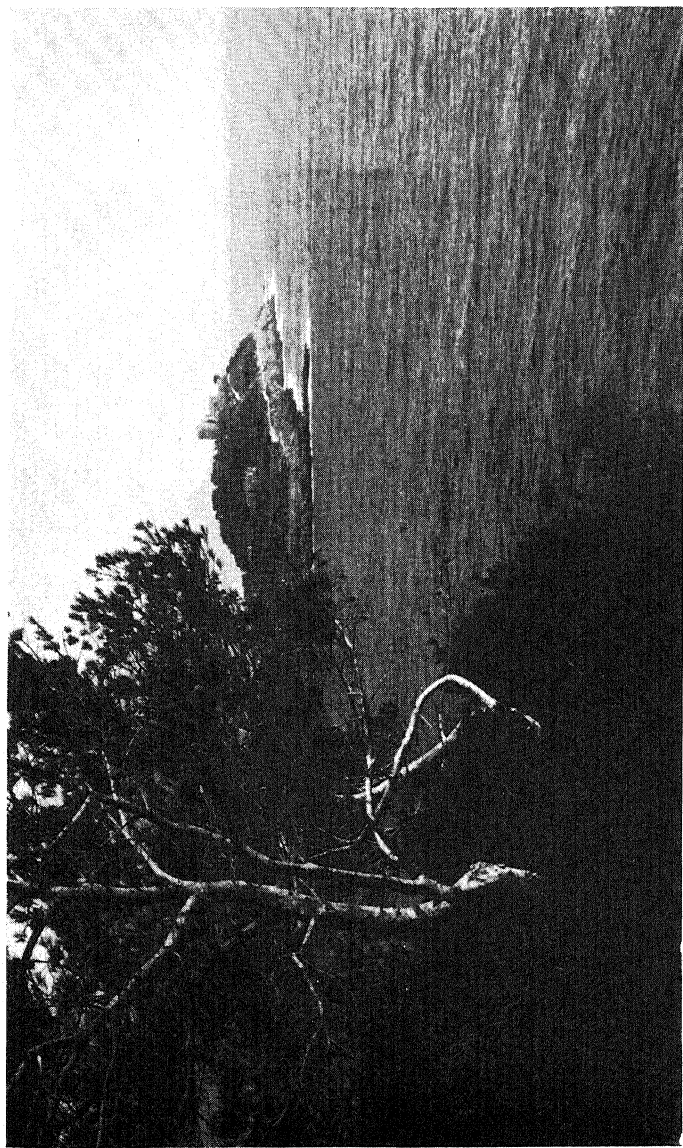
IN the gay twenties, when the franc was a joke, the Riviera had the greatest boom in its history. Young Americans were twisting hundred-franc notes through their buttonholes in imitation of the Legion of Honor, or they pasted five-franc notes on their valises, all in clean fun; but the French did not appreciate the humor; in England and the U. S. A. people remarked that a franc was still a franc to a Frenchman. Perhaps that is why the French did not appreciate the clean fun. But when the fun was over, when the franc became a stabilized citizen, the boom faded away, the captains of industry departed, and so did thousands of those gentle nomads, the spinsters of England who take their kettles and their packets of tea, their hot-water bottles and their knitting all along to the Riviera. There was a Slump. No, economists will tell us that the wealth of a country never departs, the wealth is in the subsoil—the iron, the coal, the copper or precious metals, or oil; it is the basic value—the world prices of the subsoil wealth—that fixes the value of a currency which is merely the token of a value. If we accept this statement, then the wealth of the Riviera is its sunshine, which God gave the country, and no matter how many francs there are in a pound or a dollar, the sunshine remains at the same fixed value, which, after all, is as much as you can get for it, as much as you can make a visitor pay for sitting in the sun, bathing in the sea. Boiled down, that is what it all amounts to.

If you have wandered along with me so far, you will have realized that I understand the French character pretty well, that I have no illusions whatsoever about it; I appreciate its good qualities, and I can try to explain those which are not so good, but when it comes to pure, unadulterated stupidity, I lose patience, I become intolerant. I used to have a form master who, when he lost temper with a boy, would scream: "I can't teach fools!" That is what the French call a cry from the heart, and therefore it is true; fools cannot be taught, and it is difficult indeed to suffer them gladly; one just suffers.

Those who would sell the Riviera—and I use the word *sell* strictly in the American sense—have made a bad mess of their job. They have antagonized their best friends, the writers who could give, and did give, the finest service of free publicity any country ever had; but the Riviera geese were always swans, and if you ever suggested that some of the swans were not as white as they might be, you ran a serious risk of expulsion.

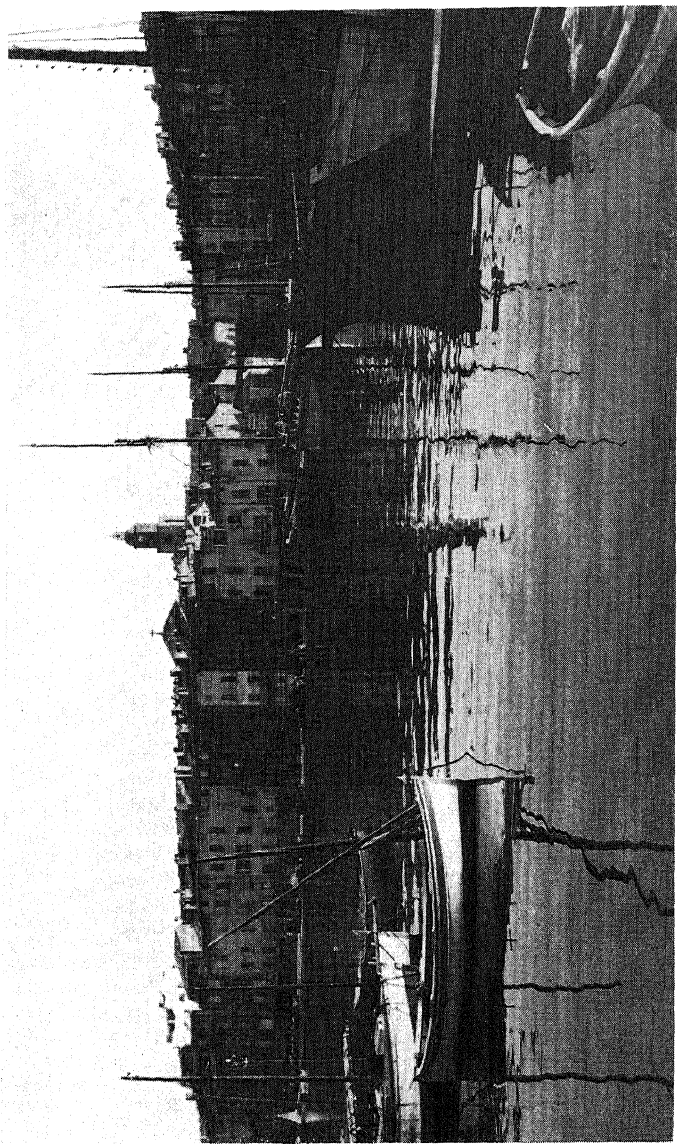
The story has never been told of the persecution to which English and American journalists were subjected during the gay twenties on the Riviera. There were so many thousands of nationals of both these countries living on or visiting the Riviera; they were news, and all the chief newspapers retained staff correspondents who sent hundreds of words every day by cable. In the beginning the sun worshipers went south in the winter only; it was but a few years before the Crash that the apricot-colored mattresses were put out on the ledges of Eden Rock, and that an American millionaire turned a small Mediterranean village into a paradise for sun bathers.

But with the cheap franc, English and Americans went into retirement on the Riviera. All sorts flocked there: absconding bankrupts, the latest divorcées, chorus girls



Courtesy Railways of France

A BEAUTY SPOT ON THE CÔTE D'AZUR: POINTE ST. HOSPICE



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ST. TROPEZ ON THE CÔTE D'AZUR

who were about to marry a millionaire, famous authors in search of a plot, Hollywood stars, there they all were, following the pathway of the sun, and they were all news. They provided the lighter side of the morning newspaper, and not always the lighter side, for there were crimes, too; English people made quite a habit of being murdered in the sunshine.

But the authorities kept a close watch on the correspondents, and the watch was intolerable. It is a fact that the rainfall on the Riviera is twice what it is in Paris. Strange, but true, yet officially it never rains on the Riviera; it is secret rain, and it must never be mentioned. Newspapers which receive revenue from Riviera advertising must never mention bad weather; from time to time they must publish photographs of girls bathing—in the winter, I mean—and the weather is always sunny. Once a newspaper with which I was connected published on its back page a large photograph of Cannes under snow. It was a beautiful picture, from an artistic point of view. Unfortunately I happened to be passing a fortnight's winter holiday in Cannes when it snowed and when the picture was published. I had never seen the picture until I saw it in the paper, nevertheless I was attacked in the local Press and demands were made for my expulsion from the Riviera.

Another time when I was spending a holiday in the South there was a water shortage, particularly at Nice, where there is often a shortage of water in the summer. I was in Cannes when a dispatch appeared stating there was a lack of water. I was entirely innocent of the dispatch, but that did not prevent a violent attack.

During a period of tension between Italy and France, when the Italian Press was calling for the return of the province of Savoy to Italy, the French moved troops to-

ward the frontier. The troops were entirely visible to the naked eye, because they filled the Place Masséna in Nice; but when some of the correspondents stationed there were bold enough to mention the fact in dispatches they were hauled before the Prefect and threatened.

That, perhaps, was not difficult to do when everything on the Riviera was fine, when there were almost as many visitors as the hotels could handle, when they raised prices until only the sky was the limit; but when the franc was stabilized and prices were high, and when every country in the world was passing through a financial and economic crisis, then the Riviera needed friends, and the friends were not there. The newspapers recalled their correspondents; there were no longer any residents who were news, and there were so few visitors that it did not matter; if an Englishman or an American got himself murdered, there was always a news agency to "cover" it. In vain the hotelkeepers brought down their prices, in vain hotels offered to accept guests and allow them to pay in dollars or pounds; who cared? The harm was done. The story went round that the Riviera was expensive, that the climate was dangerous; people remembered all the anti-Riviera stories they ever heard, and they forgot that the only commodity the Riviera had to sell was the sunshine, and the cost of that was just whatever you liked to pay. That, my friends, is the truth about the Riviera, and having told you what is wrong with it, I want you to come with me and see what is right with it.

We will leave Grasse and drive into Cannes, a mere nothing of a drive, but we will stay a moment on the way and look at Mougins in the hills; it is nothing to look at, but once upon a time the Millionaires' Golf Club was here. That is not its official name, but that is what it was, just the same. Members were accepted, not because they

had a fixed amount of blue blood in their veins, although quite a number could have passed that test, but because of the amount of money they possessed; and, like the Garrick Club in London, it did not allow its members to bring in guests. The boom period lasted nearly twelve years. Old inhabitants tell me that there was more money passing in the old days, that is to say in the pre-war days, than was ever seen in the boom period.

The pre-war days in Cannes are epitomized by the statue of King Edward VII on the promenade. Russian Grand Dukes and their mistresses, Society people from England, wealthy Americans and Germans and French were the clients who went south in the winter. The sunshine was shut off from those who were not in Society and who were not rich; if you were both in Society and rich, so much the better, but if you were in Society and had no money, you could always be a bear leader to someone with money; but it was not until after the War that the humbler person, with some money, was able to go and revel in the winter sunshine. What brought about this change? Human ambition, which seems to abound in the breasts of French and Italian waiters.

When the *commis* pours out your *café au lait* and brings you *brioche*s in the winter morning sunshine at Cannes, he is worth a glance. Very possibly you are looking on a future *maître d'hôtel* who will walk backwards one day before your Grace, bowing low as he ushers you to a table. You may be very old by then, and he will be older, too, and stouter, but he will have achieved an ambition.

Maybe he has an ambition of another sort; he may not want to be a *maître d'hôtel*, but to own his own café-restaurant; it was the young waiter with that ambition who made the Riviera sun possible for you and me. They

did not want the man of our sort, the small man; they wanted the people with champagne incomes and champagne appetites, the man who slipped a golden louis into the palm of the leader of the orchestra, the man who ate peaches at four (gold) francs apiece for breakfast, who ate caviar with a spoon; that was the client they wanted. And they found such clients in sufficient quantities to keep the big hotels on the Croisette of Cannes busy. The French in their own language and country could find a cheap *pension*, but not the fashionable Englishman, oh, dear, no.

It was the waiter who saved the tips and scraped and "shaved a dollar," as they say of the Chinaman in Shanghai, who made the sun possible. Soon the income-tax dodgers were making for the Riviera; they found out the small pensions and hotels up side streets, and with a cheap franc they could live in the lap of luxury. Quite clearly it was the income-tax dodger who created a summer season in the sun.

Nobody had ever thought of it. People were content, the Europeans I refer to, to spend weeks by the sea where there was nothing but a pale yellow disc to give the illusion of sun. Way down south there was the sun, blazing away in all its glory. At seven a.m. you could go swimming and be hot, yes, really hot. People began to remove more and more clothing for sun-bathing, and here may I whisper something which should make English and Americans blush. There are beach police at Cannes, and Juan-les-Pins, and the principal seaside resorts beside the sparkling blue Mediterranean, and do you know that it is not the French, those naughty, naughty French, who offend with their undressing habits, exposing too much flesh; it is the English and the Americans who have to be called to account.

But what the income-tax dodgers taught the French hotelkeepers was a lesson soon learned. "Here is the sun doing nothing," they said to themselves, "let us put old Sol to work." New resorts were planned, new hotels were built with paper francs, new casinos, bars, dance halls, snack bars. As Mr. Dick said about an entirely different matter: it is a mad world! So mad they could not rake the francs in swift enough. When dusk crept over the sea they dimmed the moon with flickering electric lights; they built a fun city on the promenade at Juan-les-Pins; they had those awful Dance Marathons; they had cockroach racing, everything to take a few more francs from the visitors. People spent the night gambling in the casinos, they rose late, when the sun had been working for nearly five hours, I mean five hours of real sunshine, hot as could be, then they went sea-bathing and sun-bathing, and dancing in bathing costumes on the seashore, and drinking cocktails, double cocktails, "they are terribly cheap, my dear."

It was a golden dream come true. The little *commis* who had been pouring out your morning *café au lait* threw away their white aprons and begged or borrowed money to open up somewhere. No matter where, a vacant lot or a wooden shack by the seashore, it was all one. But even before the crash there were too many hotels, too many bars, too many this and that and too much of everything. Waiters saw their dreams turn to nightmares, their savings melt like butter in the sun. There were suicides, thefts, crimes of all sorts, but the mad old world went turning and turning, waltzing away until boom turned into doom. Now the wheel has turned, as the French so often remark; in fact it has turned full circle; the Riviera is back again as it was, but the visitors are, at the time of writing, lacking. The French are the best

customers, and in winter or summer there are more French worshipping the sun than there are other nationals. You may say that is as it should be, France for the French, an expression one hears from time to time; but the slump in world affairs has also hit the French, and although it is less expensive for them to bask in the sun, it is still dear enough, and there are not enough French to go round among all the hotels and pensions waiting for customers. So many of the large hotels are in the hands of receivers, so many places have closed down, perhaps never to reopen, but the sun goes on shining, and the health-giving golden rays are there for those who do not demand luxury but are satisfied with sun and sea and pine-perfumed air. *Voilà!*

Between Cannes and Nice is a stretch of road all the world knows, but there are so many who travel with their eyes and their ears hermetically sealed that sometimes it is possible to show them something they may have missed. Opposite Cannes are a group of islands; they look very uninteresting, just a clump of trees growing on rocks. These tiny islands are the Lérins Isles, and there are many large countries with less history. The earliest story I know about them starts in the middle of the fourteenth century when the monks living on the islands leased them to Cannes against an annual rental of six écus and a couple of capons, not dear, you will allow. Nearly three hundred years later the monks again gave away the islands, this time to the Duc de Chevreuse, who became bored with having a lot of little islands lying around loose, so he gave them to the Duc de Guise, and he just could not be bothered, so he gave them to his valet named Jean de Bellon. One can well imagine the scene. The Duke, perhaps, had had a bad racing season and was short of money; he had borrowed from the valet, and had not

paid the fellow for months. "Here, my good Jean," said the Duke one fine morning, "you have been a faithful servant and I would like to do something for you." Jean would murmur that his Grace was really too good. "Not at all, not at all," said the Duke. "You know those Lérins Islands where the monks live? Well, they are yours!"

Then came Richelieu and Jean de Bellon lost his islands before he could say knife, although why it should take longer to say knife than fork or spoon I have never been able to discover. The foxy Cardinal took the islands in the King's name and fortified them, and no sooner was the work completed than the Spaniards came and attacked the islands and captured them and used them as a base for their war on Provence. In the middle of the eighteenth century the English and the Austrians and the Piedmontese captured the islands; a year later, in 1747, the Chevalier de Belle Isle recaptured them, and since then they have been French. During the World War they put German prisoners on the islands.

There is, of course, the story that the Man in the Iron Mask, which was not iron at all but velvet, was imprisoned on one of the islands for seventeen years. Undoubtedly there was a man with a mask there for that length of time, but whether the man was a brother of Louis XIV, or whether he was the Duke of Mattioli, historians will never agree.

While the sun worshipers close their eyes and bronze their skins on the golden sands of the shore, let us take a glance in passing at the little stone monument which reminds of a big event. This is where Napoleon landed on his return from Elba; from here the big little man went off to Sisteron, that big brown lighthouse overlooking the sea of green trees, and the garrison let him pass.

Here we are at Antibes, where wealthy men live in an earthly paradise, and where ever so many years ago the sleepy little bay echoed to the sound of cannon, where the English fought the French. The French wish the English would come back, not to fight, of course, but to rent the villas, to play in the casinos, to bathe, gamble, and play tennis, but, *rien ne va plus*, as the *croupiers* sadly call.

Let us climb up at the back of Nice, back into the hills above; let us go find Vence, that old, old city now at peace amidst its tall poplar trees, its quaint houses sheltered by cypress trees; let us look down into the valleys where violets grow, and where the patient peasants toil beneath the silver and green olive trees.

We will walk beneath the mimosas, see the tiny oranges growing on the trees, smell the pepper and the eucalyptus. Every twist and turn of the road shows us something fresh; up and up we go, past fields where they are growing carnations for the Paris market; another turn and we look down on the coast, the paradise of the sun worshipers, the Bay of the Angels, as they call that wide expanse of sea that semicircles the water-front of Nice. It looks too beautiful to be true, it seems as if it were a giant's postcard, hand-colored; nothing stirs, not a tree bends. We are so high that every tiny sound reaches us, the barking of a dog, the cry of a child, the crack of a rifle fired to scare birds. You look at the working people, bronzed and bent with toil, and it seems as if we were behind the scenes in some huge theater which never ceases playing a Pageant of Pleasure. These people are not the actors, but the supers, the men who march on and off at the word of command. The flowers are for the tables of the rich, the olives will make oil, and the fruit of the tree will be transferred into little glass trays to be stood on the counters of cocktail bars. The oranges and the lemons are

democratic, but the mimosa is for the rich, the eucalyptus for the sick; this back-stage scene is a huge canvas. There are sanatoria to mend men, and casinos to induce them to be broken; there is sunshine in abundance, and sometimes the mistral blows and the whole world seems out of joint.

There are millions of blooming roses, and old men and women who live sad lives shut up in the big houses to look out at them, without the strength even to go out and smell them, when the sun begins to sink and the evening breeze is sweet. Night comes and the croaking of a million frogs. The moon is high, and the sky is dark purple flecked with tinsel. The Bay of the Angels is looking as if millions of fireflies were lighting it. Up here in the hills all is peace.

Down in Nice it is another story. Nice is a large city, one of the largest in France. It is a port, it has factories, it has the pleasure side the visitor sees, and the sinister sordid side he should not see. Apart from Marseilles, Nice is undoubtedly the most depraved and vicious city on the south coast of France. It is known that there are opium dens in Toulon, as there are in Brest, too, for that matter; but in Nice there are not only opium dens, but a bright brisk traffic in cocaine and other drugs. The number of licensed prostitutes runs into hundreds and hundreds; there are dozens and dozens of what they call tolerated houses, and there are more pimps than in Marseilles. The police of Nice have a busy time, I can assure you. The official records make amazing reading; murders by the dozen, fights between rival gangs of pimps, crime of all sorts. That is the Nice you do not see, neither should you want to. Stick to the Promenade des Anglais, or if you want to explore, go through the most colorful market you have ever seen, but be there early; go through the flower market, too, and see the sellers in their

pretty local costumes; go into the old town and you will find some excellent restaurants that will repay your curiosity, but keep away from the narrow back streets and the painted houris who would entice you along the lanes to perdition.

Back again into the hills; start off early, for in the summer walking is a pain, but in winter the climbing will keep you warm, and if you keep on walking you will never need a coat while it is light. It is often said that the Riviera, or the Côte d'Azur, as the French themselves prefer to name it, kills more people than it cures; that is one of those dangerous half-truths. If you are heedless, it is not difficult to catch pneumonia, and a cold is easily caught if you sit out in the warm sun and then cross into the shade, where it is many degrees cooler, or if you go without a coat (I am talking of the winter) near any of the long, draughty streets which branch off up-town from the Promenade des Anglais. But for a hundred years and more, people have been ordered south by their doctors, and they have but to be careful and there is little chance of harm coming to them.

The summer is another story; so long as a man from the North does not go mad and bareheaded, no harm will come to him. You will be remarking that you hear as much Italian as you do French; that is quite true; in fact you hear Provençal and Italian, and very little French except from the visitors. Then, all of a sudden, you will be swept away, right off your feet, by visiting some old-world walled town like Saint Paul, and finding there an English tea shop.

Saint Paul is an ancient royal city hidden away in the hills, but visited, since it became fashionable, by every man and woman who can tear himself or herself away from the beach and the sun. Not a fragment of a chapter,

but a book, could be written about this marvelous gem of a town tucked away in the pine-scented mountains. Properly speaking, it is in the hinterland of the Riviera, between Cagnes and Vence, and no great distance from the coast. You drive there through valleys heavy with the perfume of roses, you see the white dust on the pale green of the olive trees, and wild thyme strikes the nostrils with a sharp tang.

The history of Saint Paul is the history of many of the towns of Provence I have tried to show you, but it is in a better condition, and if I dare be a heretic, I would say I like it less for that reason. I like my ruins *en nature*, I like to reconstruct for myself; when I was a little boy and was given a box of bricks I did not build my houses according to the pretty pictures which came with the bricks. I like adventure, the unknown. Saint Paul is a pure gem, beautiful as a lovely dream; the streets are delightful, the two restaurants excellent, and I feel sure that the tea shop kept by two charming Englishwomen provides tea even nicer than Mother made. But . . . well, let us go back.

Will you come with me to Sospel, a delightful ride, or shall we wander farther in the hills? It is very hot, but if you would care to step in here and ask the *patron* for a cold bottle of Bellet and a few peaches, he will respond with alacrity and so shall we. There is no closing time; he will be glad to see us if we happen in soon after sunrise, and if we care to sit and watch the moon over the valleys, making lanes of silver across the sea, he will not mind a bit; indeed, if we want to stay the night, there will be a room, not pretentious at all, and therefore not expensive.

Let us be getting back, stopping here and there in the hills to peer through railings at great houses where the beautiful gardens are running to seed. The figs are rot-

ting, the roses need attention; rank weeds strangle the vegetation and grow along the once immaculate paths. Great houses belonging to owners with great names. Here is an estate that is the property of a Balkan queen; they have not seen her in years. This big mansion belonged to a woman who was the friend of a famous European monarch. The woman is dead, and the grandson of the monarch sits*upon the throne. An old caretaker potters about the garden. For a few francs she will allow us to walk through the large shuttered rooms, the fine *salons* where once upon a time there was life and gaiety; now bats flitter and mice scamper. Out on the sunny terrace there are naught but a few lizards basking themselves. The old caretaker offers to sell us some new-laid eggs, or maybe some peaches. Hers is not a gay life. What will happen to all these great houses in the hills, in the hinterland of the Azure Coast? Perhaps in years to come tourists will visit them as now they go and look at Pompeii and reconstruct, or have reconstructed for them, the grandeur and the glories.

Who was it who once said that Monte Carlo was a sunny place for shady people? It was very rude of him, because although one must not criticize the weather all on account of the secret rain, Monte Carlo is sometimes a shady place for sunny people, especially if they have been fortunate at the tables; I mean that is what makes them sunny, there is no other reason.

The official title of the limited liability company which owns Monte Carlo is the Society of Sea Bathing. Monte Carlo is full of funny jokes like that. I always laugh at Monte Carlo, not at Monte Carlo itself, but the place is inclined to give me hysterics. I have told some people that the popping they hear going on all the morning is

the noise of the people going out and committing suicide on the Terrace; some say, "Oh, not really?" and others half smile because they have heard all about the suicides and they do not know whether to believe it or not; and the wise ones say, "Don't be silly, you know quite well that is the noise of people popping at pigeons," which is quite true, but then, almost everything is true at Monte Carlo; it is the most truthful town in Europe; it is beautiful, it is ugly, it is virtuous and vicious, it is the most lying. It is Monte Carlo.

Women lie about their age in order to obtain a card of admittance when they are very young, and they lie late at night in a night-club when they are not so very young, because they want the gigolo with them to love them for themselves alone, when the gigolo is wondering whether the woman with the uplifted face is wearing real pearls or imitation; he has been caught that way before. Sometimes at Monte Carlo I have wished I were a woman, because only a woman, dear tender hearts, can hit a gigolo in the jaw and get away with it.

Of course everybody comes to Monte Carlo for his health, for the sunshine and the sea; nobody ever comes here to gamble. In fact when they see the Casino or the Sporting Club they say to one another, "What is that big building over there? What, the Casino! Well, you don't say?" Then they go in after dinner and go home to a late breakfast, a brandy and soda and a radish. The Casino authorities are so careful to protect the morals of the Monagesques that they will not allow shopkeepers to enter the Casino; it might corrupt these dear simple souls. I always wonder why they do not provide the townspeople with blinkers so they should not see the wounded and dying pigeons flopping about the streets near the Casino.

Do not think that everybody who gambles loses; that is a fallacy, the same which makes people think that no system ever wins. There must be about fifty men and women, mostly women and mostly old, who live on the Casino. They have been doing so for years, and the Casino does not mind. Their winnings are so small, a few shillings a day. Let us go and look at them. The women are usually English, a few Dutch or Scandinavian, that is their ranking in the gambling world. They are the left-overs from the Victorian Era. Their fingers are like claws, they wear big hats, trimmed with bugles and bits of velvet, and beads. And they sit here all day and all night, or as long as their system provides for them to stay, and they so earn a living. What are they? God knows and the Casino will not say.

The Casino will not say much, but it has an eye everywhere; it knows who is winning and who is losing. Petty crooks have from time to time tried to make money by stating they had lost a packet and asking for money to pay a hotel bill and the fare home. The Casino contemptuously tells such a man exactly what he has won or lost and then kicks him out, very politely. The *croupiers* are taught their work in a school, and they are taught to watch the gamblers, but there is a secret police to watch the *croupiers*. Now and again a *croupier* is caught cheating, and they sack him at once.

What is the truth about suicides in Monte Carlo, you ask? Nobody knows, except the authorities, and they will not tell. If a man or woman dies mysteriously in Monte Carlo the body is spirited away, out of the Principality. It is said that there is a secret graveyard in Monte Carlo itself, but I have never seen it or known anybody who has.

Late at night, very late at night, when the Casino has

closed and every bar is barred and the night-clubs are shuttered, one may go, if one knows how and is accepted, to a certain café—incidentally the proprietor is a German—where the *croupiers* and the *chefs de parties* and a few waiters and such congregate and talk over the doings of the night. Here you will sometimes hear secrets. Here, if you are curious, you may ask and be told what happened to a famous star of the silent movies. Or you may ask and not be told, it all depends on whether one of the secret police of the Casino is present. But the mysteries of Monte Carlo are not for us. Let us to bed, for tomorrow is another day.

We will right-about turn, leave the sun worshipers to themselves and King Sol, and be off to a bull-fight at Fréjus.

XIX

BULL-FIGHT AT FRÉJUS

POSSIBLY there is no country in Europe which has so many laws as France, and certainly there is no country where so many laws are broken; some are just forgotten, others remain remembered but are observed in the spirit only. The attitude of the average Frenchman toward the average law is: that it is quite all right so long as it does not personally concern him. On the other side of the Rhine a law is a law, something to be observed almost without question, but the Frenchman loves liberty, and as I hope you have already discovered in this tour of France on which I play the part of the compère, he is the world's greatest individualist. An old law says that bull-fights in France are permissible, so long as the bull is not put to death. The law allows a kind of bull-baiting, a favorite sport in England in olden times. Well, here we are on the way to Fréjus, that old Roman town. Always worth a visit is Fréjus, but I particularly wish you to come with me there today, for I noticed in our hotel last night that there will be a bull-fight this afternoon, and a bull-fight in France, in this Roman setting, may be well worth your attention. Meanwhile, let us drive out along the sea route, and keep as cool as we can, this hot Sunday morning.

Fréjus was not always in this bright holiday mood. Fréjus, during the War, was rather a grim place. It was the headquarters of the Black Army of France, brought overseas from Senegal. From first to last, about half a

million black soldiers passed through the camp at Fréjus. The authorities were taking great risks. All men of military age had been called to the colors and were already fighting. Here in the South there were no males other than old men and boys. The women were unprotected except for a few gendarmes and those troops which happened to be garrisoned for coastal defense purposes. There were these huge black savage men, only recently come from their jungles, and brought to civilized France to fight. Many thousands of them, although put into the horizon blue uniform of the white French soldier, were untrained, and there were not many white non-commissioned officers. Had these black men wanted to do so, they could have broken out of camp and terrorized the countryside; but certain steps were taken to deal with mutiny or outbreak of any kind. Scattered about the huge military camp were tall wooden structures, which resembled step-ladders, with platforms on top, and on these platforms were machine-guns—an idea copied from the American prisons. Fortunately enough there never were any serious disturbances, and the drafts of black men arrived and were dispatched to the front, where they formed a large part of General Mangin's famed Iron Division, and others came from Africa to replace them, and neither France nor the rest of the world knew the grimness of Fréjus.

But this part of France, sections we have not had the time to visit on this trip, formed a side show of the War which, although unknown, was not without interest and a deal of importance. Fortunes or misfortunes of war caused me to spend some little time in this out-of-the-way battlefield, for battlefield it was, the almost silent battlefield of the Mediterranean. At St. Raphaël was a French submarine and aviation base. Foreign spies made a large

section of the south of France a happy hunting ground. To the foreign visitor the Sunny South is the section known as the Riviera and comprises roughly the coastline from Mentone to Cannes, but one is inclined to forget that the coast of the South continues for hundreds of miles, and the part of the southern coast east of Marseilles includes the great naval dockyard of Toulon. East of Toulon there is a chain of rocky mountains containing about a hundred miles of virgin forest land. This chain is called the Mountains of the Moors. The coast is rocky and wild, as wild as the scrubby bush that covers the hinterland. The sandy shore is dotted with thousands of small coves, excellent hiding places, and many of these served as revictualing bases for German submarines operating in the Mediterranean. Hunting spies and watching out for submarines was a perfect wartime pastime, relieved, however, with a modicum of comedy. The authorities took great pains to prevent any leakage of information to spies. The War was geographically so far away, and the local peasants used to say: "Ah, those people up there in the North, they make a lot of noise about their war," but because it was so far away it was easier for spies to operate, and the territory is so vast that it was impossible to locate new arrivals in districts. Whenever there was going to be an offensive on the Western Front orders were given for the telephone service to be suspended, the object being, of course, to prevent a leakage of information, but very soon it was known what the suspension meant, and no child was too small to remark on the approaching offensive, "because they have cut off the telephone."

There were several camps of German prisoners between Fréjus and St. Tropez, which has the Mountains of the Moors as a hinterland. Without wishing to offend many

of my southern French friends, I must relate that there were a considerable number of deserters from southern regiments. There were also a fair number of Germans escaping from the prison camps. The deserting Frenchmen and the escaping Germans lived happily together in the mountains. They talked a jargon of French and German. They shot squirrels, roasted and ate the little animals, and then came down into the villages at night and traded the pelts for shot. I have seen a deserter enter the *bistro* in the village of Cavalaire, he stood a drink by the local gendarme, trade his pelts, and then bid the company good night and be off to his temporary home in the mountains. What became of this strange Franco-German camp I never knew. For all I know it may still be there!

In the spacious days of the Roman Empire Fréjus was far from being the sleepy little town of fewer than ten thousand inhabitants it is today. Roman galleys in their hundreds kept the harbor and the arsenal alive. The town became known as the Market of Julius, in honor of the Emperor. The Romans built a forum and an aqueduct, as we shall presently see. The ramparts of the old walled city are today five times larger than the actual town. Now there are skeletons of a one-time greatness, but the spirit of the old Roman remains still among the mimosa trees that stand between the sea and the mountains.

The road that runs from Paris to the Riviera displays but little of the real charm of Fréjus. It goes sinuously along a narrow thoroughfare bordered by plane trees, it makes an abrupt turn by a cool splashing little fountain, and then it climbs away into the blue and the gold of the playground of the South.

To see Fréjus as it is, and to people it in the mind's eye with its former citizens of the Roman Empire, the men

who built for posterity to admire, one must leave the main motoring road, and turn inland. That is the way we are going now, for I promised you a bull-fight at Fréjus, and I shall redeem my promise, although I have kept you waiting overlong perhaps, chattering idly enough of the things on which I love to dwell.

This way to the bull-fight, the forbidden fruit of France, but correctly enough held within the structure where gladiators once fought in times gone by.

The white dust is thick on the green olive trees; it is almost inches thick on the roads. It enters the mouth and the nostrils, and it whitens the hats and the black coats of the walking hundreds making their way to the Roman theater where real bull-fighters from Spain have come to make a French holiday. All the countryside has turned out for this event. Peasants in their Sunday going-to-meeting black, children being led by the hand to their first bull-fight, their mothers trotting along, too, red of face and grasping the family umbrella. No use philosophizing or moralizing; *c'est la vie*, as any man, woman or child in this marching procession will tell you.

But stay; all have decidedly not gone to the bull-fight, for we notice all along the side of the road little stalls selling sandwiches and drinks which should be iced, but are not; peasants, despite their love of the circus parade, are loath to miss an opportunity to turn an honest penny. In order to attract attention to their wares, some of the itinerant sellers have turned on raucous gramophones, and there is only one tune today. Guess what it is? It is, rightly enough, the Toreador song from *Carmen*.

Around the ruins of the Roman theater there are little wooden pay-boxes, and we notice that the bull-fight is being held for charity. The ruins stand in their apricot-colored splendor like remnants of some splendid old mon-

ster, ribs outlined against the afternoon sky of the sunny South. The crowd is noisy, jolly, but orderly enough, yet there are soldiers to keep order; but what irony is this that the soldiers who stand stiff and grim are Senegalese, black men from savage Africa, come to guard white men witnessing a sport so savage that in most civilized countries it is on the Index?

Not moving a muscle of their black faces, the soldiers in trim khaki uniforms stand between the wide arches of the Roman theater, looking down on the crowd surging into the specially erected tribunes and wooden benches placed around the dried-earth arena of this place where the Romans once ruled as conquerors. There is a smell of garlic as the crowd munches its *goûter*, the French equivalent for afternoon tea, and while they are getting ready to release the first bull, and our neighbors on our right and left munch big garlic-scented sandwiches and take it in turns to drink warm beer from the mouth of a bottle, will you bear with me a moment or so while I digress on the subject of *goûter*? I thank you.

The word means "to taste," but it means more than that; it is the French equivalent of the Anglo-Saxon tea-time. The phrase "to take a cup of tea" has only sprung up in France during the last twenty years; and even now it is more likely that in the provinces you will be asked to come and have *goûter*, and you will be given tea, too often very weak tea. When tea became a popular afternoon function in France it was called "five o'clocker." One was called up on the telephone and a voice would inquire: "*Voulez-vous five o'clocker chez moi?*" What they call *crémeries* in France, the little shops, half tea-room and half restaurant, wanted to be in the movement, so many of them announced in white letters on their

windows: "*Cinq o'clock à toute heure*," just another example of the danger of a little knowledge.

The older expression, to taste, is elastic, and anyhow, it never meant tea. Searching back, *goûter* was originally a slab of chocolate between the halves of a roll of bread, given to little girls and boys about four o'clock in the afternoon; if they were naughty they were deprived of their *goûter*, and the threat to so deprive them was held over their heads to persuade them to behave; but the slab of chocolate and bread was merely the foundation, so to speak. When the children were taken out they were halted at a pastrycook's and given a glass of fruit sirup and water; that also was *goûter*.

But children are not the only persons who "*goute*" in the afternoons. If you happen to look in at a pastrycook's any time between four and five you will find adults standing about, bearded men and smart women, as well as midinettes and clerks out on an errand, standing in the pastrycook's with a plate and a spoon or fork. On the plates you will notice delicious little *gâteaux*, just fresh from the cook's ovens, tiny little oblong tarts of cherry or strawberry, pastry that melts in the mouth, fruits in a sweet sirup. If you stand up, you are not expected to eat more than a *gâteau* or two, but if you seat yourself at one of the round marble-top tables, then you are expected to order something to drink; it may be coffee, or tea, or milk, or a fruit sirup, for even grownups do not disdain a *grenadine*, which is the sirup of the pomegranate, or a *groseille*, which is the sweetened juice of the currant, and water.

All the best pastrycooks count on the afternoon *goûter* for a goodly part of their trade; true, the fashion is slightly *passé* now in Paris and other large cities, but on the whole it still remains very much as it was. Not only

the juicy little fruit tarts, but apple turnovers, known in France as *chaussons*, come from the ovens hot and hot, and round tarts known as *flan*, with a sort of custard filling, are favorite centerpieces of the *goûter*. Once again I must apologize for stopping you on your way to the bull-fight, and I promise you that we will delay no more. Here we are seated, the garlic sandwiches have disappeared, the warm beer has been drunk, so, on with the bull-fight.

True to the Spanish tradition, the first scene is the parade, the cavalcade of mounted men with lances, of the men who will plant the *banderillas*, the cruel barbed darts, and the men with the red cloaks, and the *matador* who will slay the bull with his sword.

Just as the bull, a tawny brute, dashes into the ring, head down, and stands poised for a split second, pawing the ground, you will do well to look around at the audience and note the sickly smile on the faces—just the sort of look you may surprise around the ring at a prize-fight, the fascination of blood. We may regret it, or deny it, but it is there just the same.

All the cruelty is supposed to have been removed from these bull-fights in France; it is difficult for a foreigner to understand how this can be done, but let us watch now and judge for ourselves. People would most certainly not put up with such cruelty to horses as one sees in the Spanish rings, so here the animals are not of the same low grade of horseflesh; they are swifter and better able to keep clear of the charging bull; neither are they used, as in Spain, to tire out the bull; perhaps this makes the work of the *matador* more difficult and maybe more dangerous, yet the *matadors* who do their bull-fighting in France are not among the front ranks of the Spaniards.

The bull charges the horse, not the man; he disregards

him entirely, but the rider, the picador, deftly rears his horse high and pivots him round, so that the point of the lance grazes the bull's neck, and then man and horse are away, the bull following; but so swift is the horse, of half Arab breed, and so skilful the rider, that the bull never catches up with the horse. This part of the fight is exciting, and in some ways it resembles bull-fighting in Portugal rather than in Spain. Only once have I ever seen a horse touched by the horns of the bull, and then it was only a scratch on the flank.

This afternoon, while the sun begins to go down and throws purple shadows across the ring, this ancient tragedy of the bull-fight is played, because a tragedy it is, and the end is known in advance; it must be defeat for the bull, death that comes in the afternoon, death for the bull, but sometimes death, or at least severe injury, for the toreador. Seldom, however, is the fighter injured; the bull it is that dies.

The horseman rides out of the ring to rounds of applause. Now come the *banderillas*. The bull, a very young beast, more calf than bull, but nevertheless full of fire and fight, looks puzzled, bewildered; he seems to be beginning to ask himself what it is all about, why this bother, this crowd, this noise and tumult? He shakes his head, and again paws the ground. The Senegalese soldiers high above the ring stand still and unmoved.

With a barbed dart in each hand a man walks toward the puzzled bull, who keeps a wary eye on the man, seeming to be saying to himself, "What's going to happen now?" The bull stands stock still; but this is no use at all to the man who intends to plant a *banderilla* in the bull. The man and the bull face each other, looking into each other's eyes. The man stamps his feet, the bull looks down and moves slowly forward, at not more than a

walking pace, but his horns, those deadly curling prongs, are not more than a foot or so from the man's chest. The man's arms shoot forward with the rapidity of the strike of a snake, planting the banderillas, long shafted sticks, in the right and left flank of the bull; the animal shakes himself angrily, and the dart on the left flank falls out of the quivering flesh. The crowd applauds, and the man trots happily away.

We begin to notice a woman in white sitting forward in a front-row seat to our left. She is dark and handsome, very much like a Spanish woman. She wears a white turban, like an Indian rajah, and to heighten the resemblance there is a large jewel shining in the middle of the turban. She wears a white, close-fitting bodice, and a white skirt; the dress is of shining silk. She is excited, her eyes flash, her wide red mouth is moist, her body shivers, twists, and she moves backwards and forwards in her seat, like a child at a circus; but it is not the healthy excitement of a child, it is the sensual excitement of a woman of middle age. Other people notice her and ask one another who she may be. But here is another man come to plant banderillas in the neck of the bull. The animal is now wary, more wary than before; he has been tricked, he is resentful and more dangerous. The woman in white senses this and half rises from her seat.

The bull no longer stands still to be tortured, he is on the move; it is difficult for the man to hit a moving target. This man does not stamp his feet to attract the attention of the bull; he keeps his eye on the animal in order to dodge quickly at the first sign of a charge. But the bull does not make a mad rush at the man; the two, the man and the bull, are now, you notice, like two boxers in the ring; they seem to circle round each other warily watching, but neither daring to make a move or a feint. You

feel the excitement rising inside you. You hate it, but you watch it, as fascinated as a rabbit by a boa constrictor. It is horrible, and yet not more horrible than the woman in white who is bunching her shoulders, giving quick little hissing noises, sliding backwards and forwards, half rising and then sliding, and all the time there is a grin on her handsome face, and fire seems to flash from her snapping black eyes.

How long does it last? In reality, not more than two or three minutes, but it seems like a long-drawn-out play, and you watch, now the bull, now the man, and all the time the woman in white, because she is like a silent chorus, the Shakespearian commentator, who tells the audience what is coming; and while we watch there come perhaps to our memory those lines uttered by the chorus before one of the acts of *Henry V*: "Can this cockpit hold the vasty fields of France . . ."

This is a cockpit, this ruined Roman theater so close to the blue Mediterranean, and although it is not a question of conjuring the mind to make it hold the vast realms of glorious France, we cannot help wondering what the devil these people are doing in this gallery? These are French people, maybe, and quite probably we are the only foreigners present on this hot Sunday afternoon, while the purple shadows take on a deeper shade, and the black sentries stand like frozen men.

The bull rushes, just what we have been expecting, but at the same time the man acts like an automaton, and his flashing brown velvet-clothed arms plant two banderillas in the bull's neck; and despite the shaking head of the animal, the darts stick fast, and the applause is even louder as the man smiles his way out of the ring.

The woman in white, who has now become the cynosure of all eyes, rises to her feet to applaud. The bull-fighters

remark her, and the next man who comes to plant banderillas tries to maneuver the bull so that he plays to an audience of one.

But the bull is now tired of the tumult, tired of being the sport of a Sunday afternoon crowd. He wants to finish with all this nonsense, he seems mutely to say, and he has taken a violent dislike to mankind. This dislike is expressed in a fierce charge he makes as soon as the man with the barbed shafts comes forward to the center of the ring. The man who wanted to pose before the queen in white is acutely distressed; he stands not upon the order of his going, but bolts like a frightened rabbit, the bull hard at his heels. It is a moment of comedy, and Shakespearian students may liken it to the Master's production of the Clown at the right moment, when the tragedy is giving us a headache.

But the comedy does not last very long. The bull trots back to the middle of the ring, while the crowd laughs, and then the man comes back, looking, it must be confessed, just a little bit sheepish. It starts all over again, this planting of the barbed darts; but the man, as if to make up for his undignified exit, shows some impatience; and now he does not bother about appealing to the woman in white who is bobbing up and down like a jack-in-the-box. The bull gathers speed for a charge, and the man plants his banderillas very quickly. One holds fast, and one falls even before the bull begins to shake his head. The neck of the bull is, we notice, badly scratched and blood is dripping from it.

Now a bugle sounds for the last act of the tragedy. In Spain it is the signal for the toreador to enter with his sword and slay the bull for the bright eyes of the señoritas present; but at our hotel you may have noticed that this fight at Fréjus is expressly stated to be *sans mise à mort*,

without death for the bull. How then will this tragedy end? Will it be with a song and dance, with the bull dancing a *pas de seul*? Let us watch.

The toreador swaggers in with the best tradition of the Spanish bull-ring as a background. He sights the woman in white and makes her a bow. She seems flattered, but still intensely excited. Maybe she knows what is going to happen, maybe she does not. Were she in a Spanish bull-ring, and the bull was to be put to death, it is possible she might be given the ear of the bull, for prized above rubies is such a gift of the toreador.

Now to arms. The man carries a red flag on a small stick; this is to attract and annoy the bull. Beneath his long cape the toreador carries his sword, with the blade raised at an angle of about thirty degrees. The excitement is growing, but you and I are merely interested in how it will end. We know there will be no death for the bull, so what?

Obliquely the toreador advances, waving the red flag, but the bull looks bored and takes no notice. The man and the bull are now face to face, and the bull appears to be perfectly indifferent. The toreador waves the flag almost in the bull's face, but the bull brushes it away, just as a sleepy old man might shake his face in the presence of an annoying fly. But the toreador expects to be paid for this pleasant Sunday afternoon, and he must do his job, an awkward one when the bull will not play his part. The woman in white is now standing up, gazing almost reverently at the toreador, who shows by his smile that he is conscious of the woman. All the hundreds of people here assembled, you and I included, are conscious of her; only the bull and the black soldiers seem unconscious of her.

Again the red flag is waved, but still the bull is

adamant. The crowd begins to fidget, it has paid its francs and it wants and expects action. Almost touching one another the man and the bull stand. Then the toreador steps backwards and produces his sword from beneath his cape, rather with the air of a conjurer producing a rabbit. He prods the bull in the neck with the sword, and the bull twitches his head. Then the toreador, with a quick glance at the woman in white, drives his sword into the bull's neck, and the bull weakens at the knees, then slowly sinks to the ground. There is applause and the toreador produces a knife from his girdle and cuts off the right ear of the bull. He runs toward the woman in white and hands it to her; she hugs it to her bosom and then holds it aloft, and on the immaculate white bodice there is a deep red stain.

So ends the bull-fight at Fréjus. I wonder how the black soldiers liked it? It must have been a fine lesson for them in the civilization of the white man.

XX

GATEWAY TO ASIA

THE time is approaching for us to wish one another God-speed. My ship will soon be calling for me at this Gateway to Asia, and so we take our last look for the time being at the Face of France.

Marseilles is the answer to the sailor's prayer. This southern port is just the place for Jack ashore, no matter from what country he may have come. This place is the careless, free-and-easy maritime house of call, where East and West meet on common ground, and where East is just as liable to stab West in the back as not.

Those who have roamed the ports of the world will have no illusions about Marseilles; nevertheless, if you will come with me I can promise you an insight into something rather different from what you may have expected.

The Canebière, the long street which divides Marseilles into two, is as fascinating as a Parisian boulevard, but much more noisy. Everybody is shouting, everybody is trying to make himself heard above his neighbor. When Jack ashore is feeling respectable he may stride along the "Can o' Beer" with his rolling gait, looking at the shops and the pretty girls, but it is not in the "Can o' Beer" that he takes his pleasures gladly; that will be in the Vieux Port which we shall see presently.

Sit for a moment, though, and watch the world go by, the world and the half-world of Marseilles. Glance at that kiosk over there; it looks like a Paris newspaper kiosk, but it is selling fish, not newspapers. The Marseil-

lais care not if it be May or August; for them every month has an R in it—they roll them hard enough, so they should know; oysters are in season three hundred and sixty-five days a year. But although there are baskets and baskets full of oysters, there are also other baskets of dripping fish, fish with the fresh seawater oozing on to the pavement below, baskets containing silvery, shining mackerel, red mullet, black lobsters, pale red crawfish, green-shelled crabs, all alive, all alive, all alive—O!

Then there are other and more strange denizens of the deep: things which look like porcupines, and which are called *clovis*, other strange fish, too, known as *oursins*, or little bears.

Screaming, pushing, jostling, the pageant passes by. Arab women with swaying hips, thick-lipped negroes, a daintily dressed young woman with heavily carmined cheeks, three Lascars just off a P. & O. docked this morning. Here come four little Annamites, and over there, look, is a richly dressed Chinaman. Merchants, tramps, harlots, seamen, clerks, dog-stealers, typists, hawkers, cocaine runners—what a background for a film that some day somebody will write! The mysteries of Marseilles.

For, let me tell you, Marseilles is mysterious; its little crooked back streets hold all the vices of the world; but that, after all, is just what you will find in all great ports the world over. The real mysteries are to be found elsewhere, in and around Marseilles.

This southern port was the center of the great medical racket. There was a link-up between certain doctors and war-wounded men to defraud the State. The doctors gave men coupons to purchase free of charge medicines, pills, and lotions; but the men did not need them, so they obtained other articles instead from the chemists—scent

and powder and such-like luxuries for their girl friends; but the State had to pay the doctors for medical attendance.

Then there were the voting scandals and the pension scandals of Marseilles. My friend George White himself could never have thought up as many Scandals as they fixed in Marseilles. Dead men, so they say, tell no tales, but in Marseilles dead men have voted early and often. Votes are worth money. The electoral machine in France works from the *bistros*, the small wine-shops; that is where many elections really are fought, or bought, whichever you prefer. Votes of dead men have been purchased by the hundred. The procedure is not very complicated. The electors' cards of dead men are purchased or stolen from the heirs, and are passed into the hands of living men; a voter can then vote once for himself, with a genuine card, and again with the card of a dead man. There have been plenty of instances of "dead men" drawing pensions, and an English journalist friend of mine who was investigating conditions in Marseilles came across a well-authenticated instance of a man drawing a salary as caretaker of an unbuilt public library!

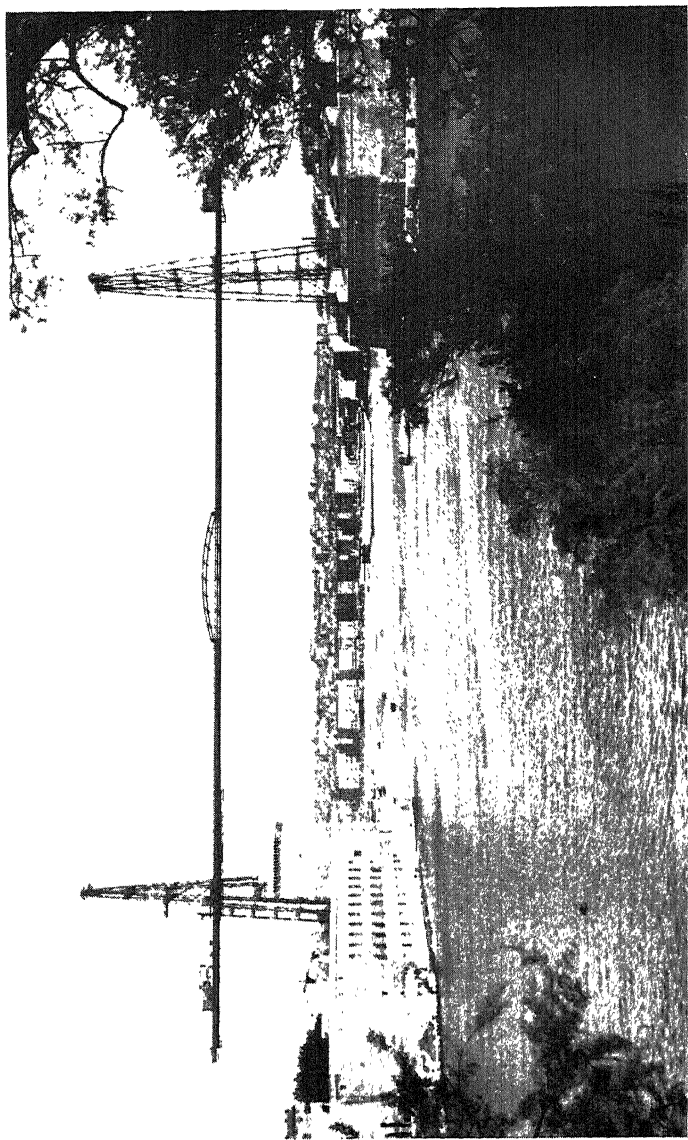
The Marseilles police records are full of mysterious cases which affect foreigners as well as Frenchmen. During the War an Englishman who later became known in England and the United States as a writer of criminal fiction, was expelled from the Marseilles region. Many will recall the disappearance of Mr. Reginald Lee, the British Vice-Consul, a case which remains a mystery until this day. There have been many murders which have never been solved, and the dark records of the local police contain amazing stories of the financing of smugglers, of drug-running, and crimes of all sorts.

One night, by favor of the Chief of Police, I took part



Courtesy Railways of France

OLD HARBOR, MARSEILLES: CHURCH OF NOTRE DAME DE
LA GARDE IN THE BACKGROUND



Courtesy Railways of France

THE TRANSSHIPPING BRIDGE AT MARSEILLES

in a gigantic round-up. Men and women of all nations were caught in the net. There were six hundred police on duty; three hundred suspects were taken to various police stations and interrogated, but only thirty-two were later convicted of crimes. On the following day a police inspector took me with him on a twenty-four-hour turn of duty. It was one of the most surprising experiences I have ever known in France.

There was a sweet sickly smell of rotting wheat. A sword-swallower was giving his open-air entertainment for the benefit of the beachcombers, idle sailors and loungers along the quayside of the Vieux Port. There was a rattle of cranes. Men with red-rimmed eyes, tattered clothes, and heelless shoes pottered about among the débris of the docks; men who suffer from sea fever, who cannot drag themselves away from the rotting wheat, the tang of the sea, the wine-shops along the quay, from the women, sirens of the shore, who clutter up the reeking side streets of the Reserved Quarter.

I went to see the Stolen Goods Market, which occupies two small streets, with lean-to sheds against a brick wall. In this market you can buy back your property a few hours after it has been stolen. So long as you ask no questions you will hear no lies.

On the barrows or push-carts are leather bags (the contents have been disposed of elsewhere) with the labels of numerous hotels on them; good, solid-looking British bags, many of them. Clothes, too, are for sale; but if you want to buy a gold watch and chain you must step around the corner. It is yours if you pay the price and ask no questions.

Strolling with the detective was an unusual experience. He nodded to men and women well known to him as evil-doers, but I could not help noticing that with all the

smiles and nods he received, there were furtive glances at him all the time. Then, with the air of asking me to go and partake of a dish of tea, my detective said: "Let's go and have a look at the *quartier des bandits*—the thieves' quarter."

This delectable spot is situated close to the Municipal Opera House. There are small cafés, with men and women sipping the yellow-greenish near-absinthe; the real absinthe has been forbidden since the War, but the synthetic is as like it as one pea is like another.

Conversation, I remember, drooped as we entered one small café and sat down and called for a drink. Over against the zinc-topped bar was lounging a good-looking young man in a smart gray suit, a gray hat, and gray suède-topped shoes. I expected to be told he was a crook, and nodded my head toward him. The detective strolled across and tapped the young man on the shoulder. The stranger swung round and smiled a welcome. The detective invited the gray young man to come and sit and drink with us. We shook hands and were enchanted to know one another. Drinks came.

"Had you in the round-up last night?" began the detective pleasantly. The young man smiled, showing his white and splendid teeth. "Yes," he grinned, "and you know damned well your policemen kept me until late this afternoon. Fools! They have nothing on me, and you know it."

"Nevertheless, we shall have you one of these days," came back the detective conversationally, "and then a nice trip overseas for you . . . how many women have you got now?"

"What's that to do with you?" almost snarled the now scowling young man. "You let me alone; women [with a shrug], four, five, six, what's it matter? There must be

women, *hein?* But it's not that you want me for; you want to send me down because of the *coco* [cocaine], *hein?* Well, why don't you go after some of the big boys, not the hawkers?"

"I can't get justice," he said, turning to me. "I was once in trouble when I was a kid, and they took my fingerprints and they have never let me alone since." Then to the detective: "Why, when my flat was burgled and they took Vera's fur coat, your damned policemen wouldn't even allow me to lodge a charge." A deep drink, then: "I tell you what, Inspector, if I were not a crook I'd be a detective. Know why? Because I'd stay in the force long enough to save some money and then I'd retire and start a private detective agency."

Then, with a bow to me, he raised his glass. "*Monsieur l'Inspecteur*, your very good health," and he finished his drink and swaggered away back to the counter.

The detective gave me his record. He was what the French police call a *marchand de femmes*, or what we call a white slave trafficker. He peddled dope and did a little burgling in his spare time, the detective said. I sought a few more details. "He is an Algerian born here in Marseilles," said the police officer; "he has a wife who knows all about how he lives. Jealous? Of course she is jealous, but these women of his are no more to him than goods to be sold. Perhaps one of these days we shall catch him, and then he will go overseas."

It is dark along the quayside. Men with the sea fever are pottering about among the débris of the docks. All of a sudden we come to a small open space standing back from the quayside. In the middle is a pretty little splashing fountain, and around it, standing idly about in groups of four or six or eight, are black men, black men from Senegal, from North America, from the Indies of the

West and the East. There are black men in French uniforms, and there are men of the blackest ebony shade in the blue dungarees of the stoker. None sit, they just stand and converse in low tones, and the moon shines through the trees on this little open space which is as quiet and peaceful as some village green.

Then at the back we notice a street so narrow, you could span it by extending both arms. The houses are six or seven stories high, and stretched across the narrow street from window to window are clotheslines weighed down with washing. And from this narrow, exciting little street come and go a procession of black men. From down the street comes the hoarse laughter of white women in kimonos. We go into the street, stepping aside to avoid knocking over little half-caste children who are romping between these houses of shame.

The negroes, the silent black men, politely make way for us. The street is pitch dark, as black as the black men who move up and down in solemn and silent procession, but all the way up the inclined street are slots of orange light. We look right into a small room in which is an iron bedstead; across each doorway is a curtain, and sometimes the slot of orange light is blotted out by a woman's arm passed through the curtain with an easy movement born of long practise.

The kimono-clad women are neither young nor beautiful, they are coarse featured and buxom, but the massive black men, the Senegalese in khaki uniform, the negroes from the ships, show no sign of annoyance at any lack of beauty. They step up and down the street and exchange a whisper or two, and then they step into the slot of orange light and the curtain is drawn across with a snap.

And while the women exchange views on their trade, and the black men with slow tread move up and down,

stopping here and there, little half-caste children play about the street, forgotten and forgetting.

We move out of the negro quarter into another street, where gramophones and noisy automatic pianos play in big houses which seem out of place in such surroundings; but the explanation is simple. The Reserved Quarter was formerly known as the Noble Quarter. It was formerly the aristocratic section of Marseilles, in the days before the Revolution. The houses, tall, imposing, beautifully proportioned, and full of exquisite carvings, are now all that remain of the once Noble Quarter.

Outside the houses, which for their present purposes of tolerated houses have numbers eight or ten times the size of ordinary house numbers, are sitting women whose physical charms vanished in the days of long ago. These are the madams who run the houses.

"*Ah, bonjour, la mère!*" exclaims the detective jovially to a woman who gives a start of pleased recognition.

"*Bonsoir, inspecteur,*" she replies hoarsely. "Always a pleasure to see *you*, I'm sure."

"Bit quiet tonight, isn't it?" queries the detective.

"All your fault," tittered the lady, "you with your raids. A fine show last night, but nothing doing here. Raid me and welcome, I say; everything here is fair and above board."

We walk on. A suspiciously beautiful young man toying with a red carnation passes us; men and women, age and youth, jostle and push their way up and down the narrow street of this human rabbit warren. We reach a relatively quiet section. It is the top of a street which ends with a steep flight of stone steps going heaven knows where. Three young men in blue dungarees are standing talking to a woman sitting outside a house. It all looks ordinary enough, but with a bound the detective is with

the group. "Preparing a little stick-up, *hein?*" he snarls, and his hands flash out like forked lightning, and with the skill of a conjurer he runs his hands up and down over the jackets and hip-pockets of the three young men. They grin.

"No firearms? Good," barks the detective, "but clear out from here, quickly, do you hear?" They do not wait to be told twice.

Five minutes later we run into the notorious "hat trick." A young woman stands on the top step of three outside a doorway. In the semi-obscurity she certainly looks alluring. She is exchanging banter with a man whose hat she suddenly snatches from his head and runs indoors with it. The man, laughingly protesting, was just going to follow the girl to recover his hat, when the detective, who seems to have eyes at the back of his head, swung round, pushed the hatless man on one side and darted into the house. I follow.

Just behind the door is a man, like a rat, preparing to fly at the heedless and hatless man who was just going to fall into the trap. Go after your hat, and if you refuse to be blackmailed, you may find a knife between your third and fourth rib.

The detective catches the crouching man by the collar, boxes his ears hard, and sends him spinning, picks up the hat, tosses it outside, and we walk on.

Would you like a game of fan-tan? Rather a pipe of opium? Just say the word, for here we are in the miniature Chinese quarter of Marseilles. Here it is as silent as the grave itself. Not a sound of music or life, but the Chinese pad up and down, as quietly as the negroes far away. Some places are just restaurants; the others are just small French wine-shops, although the *patron* and the customers are Chinese. The detective tells me that unless

there is a murder, as there was two days after I was in this quarter the last time, the police have no trouble at all with the politely bowing, silk-clad Chinese; but he added that he himself knew nothing of the mysteries of Marseilles China Town.

I have commenced this chapter with a visit to the underworld of Marseilles, but this, the second city of France, with a population of nearly six hundred thousand, has a historical background that is not shared with many other cities in France. The underworld is both colorful and vicious, but there are two Marseilles, the one you have seen, and the one I propose to disclose to you now.

The old city with its narrow, winding streets can be duplicated in many other places, but rarely does one come across such a mixture, such a mingling of wide and shady avenues and dirty slums, roaring streets lined with cafés and beautiful cathedrals perched on high rocks dominating a city that itself dominates a harbor which lies at the crossroads between West and East. Once I happened to be in Marseilles on Armistice Day, and I took a horse cab and let myself be taken for a drive that meandered through the mellow autumn sunshine along the Corniche, past the house that used to belong to that famous beauty, Gaby Deslys. Accidentally I witnessed the most strange and moving Armistice celebration it has ever been my lot to see.

Small boats began slowly to glide out to sea from the Vieux Port; each boat seemed to lead a convoy of other boats, all moving slowly. My old cabman, sitting bunched up on the driver's seat, removed his hat, as men do when a funeral passes. I asked after a moment or two why the hat was removed. The driver, pointing to the sea, said it was the Armistice service for the *Gens de Mer*.

In each boat leading a convoy was a pastor, a priest, or

a rabbi, all creeds united in this unique Armistice Day service. From the high hill where I waited I could hear nothing of the chanting that one imagined was coming from the creeping boats, but presently the other boats in the convoy moved forward and began to circle round. Then the people in the boats, relatives of seamen who had fallen in the War, began to throw flowers on the face of the waters. Round and round the boats moved, and very soon the surface of the sea was like a huge floating flower garden; seldom have I seen anything so beautifully pathetic. They threw autumn flowers, asters and chrysanthemums, and the sea was russet and red and yellow and white, and the blossoms floated on the blue Mediterranean. Then the boats went back to the Port, leaving the sea entirely deserted, except for this enormous patchwork quilt of floating flowers.

Rarely has Marseilles escaped for very long periods from the blare of trumpets, the beating of the drums of war; her whole history has been played to the tramp of soldiers, either fighting in the streets or on the hills above the city, or sailing out of the harbor to fight overseas, stirred by the music of the "Marseillaise" and the memory of the girl they left behind.

It is claimed that Marseilles is the oldest town in France—that its history begins somewhere about 600 B.C. It is stated that the town of Massalia, as the Romans called it, was founded by Greek navigators, and that the great city became a rival of Tyre, Rhodes and Carthage, and withstood assaults from these rivals. Certainly Massalia became an ally of Rome, and we find the Romans setting up colonies in Nice and Antibes. There was a jolt to the prosperity of Marseilles when the city, after the conquest of Gaul, linked up with Pompeii. Julius Cæsar came down on the city by the sea and with his galleons he be-

sieged it so successfully that Massalia had to surrender its treasures and its ships. Massalia was stripped bare of its colonies, except Nice, and then the Roman Emperor set up a rival maritime port at Fréjus, not so far away.

There is a legend we come across every now and then in Provence concerning Lazarus. The story goes that after being returned to life, Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary, landed near Marseilles. But there are facts besides legends. The Visigoths swept down on Marseilles and took it, lost it, and took it again. In the year 537 the Franks had it. Then the city was ravaged in turn by the Lombards, the Saxons, the Saracens and the Normans. With the coming of the Crusades, Marseilles opened up a new era of wealth and prosperity, but later the upper town and the lower split up, just as we saw happen in Carcassonne. The upper town was under the orders of a bishop, while the inhabitants of the lower town bent the knee in obedience to a governor who ruled as a Count of Provence. The lower town rose up and sent the Count away and set up a republic. In the late fifteenth century we find Marseilles united under the Crown.

But that only began a new series of fights. The people of Marseilles loved their liberty, always did. They resisted the Constable of Bourbon; they were stanch Catholics and wanted to defend their municipal autonomy. Curious how old ideas and customs stick through the centuries in France. Nowadays in Marseilles municipal elections there are always a few fights and many a man has fallen to a hail of revolver shots.

For years and years there was so peace in Marseilles; here and there in our walks about the city we come across reminders, monuments, or merely a tablet on a wall recalling some particularly colorful phase of the history of the great old city. Spanish troops were brought into the

city to keep order, but Charles de Casaulx, who brought them in, was killed for his pains, and Marseilles was Royalist again.

That old fox Mazarin twice tried to take away the liberties of the people, and twice Marseilles rose in revolt. Louis XIV came in as a conqueror, but he had to build a fort on a high hill to hold the city. Then came Colbert and another burst of prosperity.

But this did not last so very long, perhaps not more than about fifty years, for in 1720 the dread plague came from the East and struck Marseilles. From time to time during the past twenty years I have heard rumors of plague cases in Marseilles, but these stories have never been verified. One dreads to think what might happen even today were there an outbreak of bubonic plague in this Gateway to Asia. But a hundred odd years ago, not so long in the life of mankind, one half of the population of Marseilles died. There were only eighty thousand inhabitants then; the population has grown rapidly in the last hundred years, but forty thousand plague victims is an awful figure.

The plague struck suddenly and there was panic in those narrow crooked streets, where stricken persons were left to die and to rot. Terrible as the casualties were, they would have been worse still had it not been for the heroism of a small but devoted body of men whose names are venerated in Marseilles even until this day. Bishop Belzunce and the Chevalier de Roze were the leaders who helped to succor the dying and to save hundreds of lives.

The Revolution of 1792 tore Marseilles with strife. The city was Royalist, and Barbaroux called upon the aristocracy of Marseilles to follow him to Paris, which they did, and a leading part they played in those dramatic days

in the French capital. It will be recalled that the hymn written and composed by Rouget de Lisle became known as the "Marseillaise."

But after the departure of the aristocrats, there was a sudden change of heart in Marseilles; the city, still reactionary, joined forces with Lyons, Toulon, and Avignon, but there were bloody battles. When the Revolution was successful, thousands of inhabitants had to flee the city and take refuge in Toulon. All was quiet until 1815, when once again the Royalist feeling became uppermost and there were grave disorders and some street fighting.

Peace reigned, but not for long. There was more fighting in 1842 because of the presence in Marseilles of the famous Duchesse de Berry, and then again the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune were signals for more turbulence in this ever-turbulent Marseilles.

Peace again until 1914. The 15th Army Corps, which had its headquarters in Marseilles, was unfortunate in the early days of the World War, and many men were taken prisoners by the Germans. Paris does not like Marseilles, and Marseilles does not like Paris. Paris pins many a ribald story on to Marseilles, and accuses the Marseillais of being boasters and braggarts, and the misfortunes of war only intensified the bitter feeling.

History, as I have had the occasion to remark elsewhere, never really dies, and in musty volumes and in museums it lives less than in the imaginations of those who can recreate the scenes which have, I feel sure, some occult influence on the living. The turbulence of Marseilles today has had its counterpart in the past. Geography has made Marseilles what it is. It is the Sovereign of the Mediterranean, the last link with old world civilization for those going East, and the first contact of those coming home to the West. Many a woman has traveled overland to Mar-

seilles to say good-by to a man who has gone eastward, but who actually "went west," as we used to say in the War. I know of no city in France which has hidden so many tragedies, odd little stories which never find their way into the newspapers.

Marseilles has its British memories, too, many and many of them. During the War, the last time the city was near to strife, thousands of Indian troops arrived at Marseilles and went to the front line. For many it was an Indian Army Base, and there were several British A.P.M.'s stationed there from time to time. The aftermath of war was tragic, too, for several British officers demobilized in Marseilles lost their grants in unfortunate businesses.

The stories the stones of Marseilles could tell! The heartbreaks, and perhaps joys, too. And now at this Gateway to Asia I leave you.

Good-by . . . and *au revoir!*

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